

PRESS RELEASE

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Novel Coronavirus Outbreak

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AAPA Comments on Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Outbreak

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia – Commenting on the current developments regarding the Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak, Mr. Andrew Herdman, Director General of the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA) said, “The safety and well-being of the travelling public are always uppermost in our minds. Asia Pacific carriers are well-prepared to handle health crises including those involving communicable diseases, and are taking every possible measure to minimise the risk of the novel coronavirus being spread more widely across frontiers. The air transport industry is strictly following established guidelines developed by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), in consultation with the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and Airports Council International (ACI), covering the management of public health events.”

On the important role played by the WHO in responding to the current situation, Mr. Herdman said, “We very much appreciate the leadership being shown by the WHO in coordinating the global response to the current outbreak. It is worth noting that the WHO has to date not recommended any restriction of international travel or trade based on the current information. It would, however, be prudent for people who are ill to delay international travel and for people developing symptoms following international travel to seek medical attention.”

Noting that a number of governments have nevertheless introduced various measures including travel advisories, border entry restrictions and quarantine requirements, Mr. Herdman commented, “Regrettably, some of these measures, whilst well-intentioned, seem to lack any proper public health justification, whilst causing significant and widespread disruption to travel and trade activities across the world. Arbitrary restrictions and blanket travel bans are inconsistent with the International Health Regulations, and result in unnecessary inconvenience and added uncertainty amongst members of the public. Governments in Asia and elsewhere must strengthen dialogue and work together

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with WHO, ICAO, and other stakeholders to develop a more comprehensive strategy and globally co-ordinated set of policy measures in response to the current outbreak.”

Regarding the effect on travel and tourism, Mr. Herdman said, “Understandably, growing public concern about the outbreak has already had a very significant impact on demand for air travel across the region, forcing airlines to cut back or suspend services on affected routes. The risk of crews being subjected to arbitrary quarantine measures has resulted in further operational disruption, regardless of any proper risk assessment. Airlines are generally waiving cancellation fees or providing refunds to affected passengers on these routes. Rather than impose arbitrary travel bans, we believe that passengers can be trusted to make informed decisions, provided that there is open and transparent communication of accurate information.”

“At this critical juncture, improved co-operation and co-ordination by international organisations, national governments, health authorities and everybody involved in combating this global health emergency are of overriding importance. Asia Pacific airlines are fully committed to working closely with the relevant governments and national health authorities to support such efforts in the wider public interest.”

“AAPA is closely tracking this rapidly evolving situation, and will continue to work closely with other industry stakeholders in addressing further developments.”

Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA)

The AAPA is the trade association for scheduled international airlines based in the Asia-Pacific region. The AAPA permanent secretariat is headquartered in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia with international representation in Brussels and Washington, D.C. Collectively, the region’s airlines carry 1,623 million passengers and 23 million tonnes of cargo, representing over one-third of global passenger and air cargo traffic, and thus play a leading role in the ongoing development of global aviation.

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