

PRESS RELEASE

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AAPA 66th Assembly of Presidents /
Resolutions

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AAPA CALLS FOR SEAMLESS CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL, SAFETY EXCELLENCE AND AVIATION SUSTAINABILITY *Governments remain uncoordinated in harmonizing travel requirements*

Bangkok, Thailand – Airline leaders at the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA) 66th Assembly of Presidents held in Bangkok, Thailand, this week welcomed the gradual return of air travel in the Asia Pacific region after more than two years of border closures and lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis has strengthened their resolve to redouble efforts to address regulatory challenges relating to passenger facilitation, safety and sustainability. These topics have all been covered in a series of resolutions passed by the AAPA Assembly of Presidents today.

Noting the proliferation of onerous regulations imposed on the air transport industry during the pandemic, AAPA airline chiefs stressed the critical importance of governments adopting a more coordinated approach to ensure the speedy recovery of the sector in the coming months.

“AAPA carriers have shown great resilience in confronting the challenges brought about by the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, whilst maintaining the highest safety standards,” said Mr. Subhas Menon, AAPA Director General. “However, the lack of coordination of travel requirements across borders, and the burden of restrictive government regulations, hold back the sustainable recovery and growth of Asia's carriers, as well as their ability to fully contribute to the social and economic development of the region.”

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RESOLUTIONS

Passenger Facilitation

Whilst many governments introduced digital applications (apps) to process contactless pre-travel verification of health status, many of these apps were neither interoperable with each other, nor enabled for other purposes, such as for immigration clearance or check-in, resulting in confusion for travellers. Existing e-passport technology can be leveraged for digital travel credentials and pre-verification of traveller identity for seamless immigration clearance. This would also help alleviate the congestion at many airports due to manpower constraints, as well as queues at immigration checkpoints.

AAPA calls on governments and border control agencies to work together in the adoption of interoperable digital applications for air travel, in accordance with ICAO guidance, so as to reduce unnecessary pre-departure congestion, delays and inconvenience to the travelling public. AAPA also calls on governments to use existing passenger data exchange systems to provide integrated pre-travel verification responses to aircraft operators related to immigration, security and public health requirements, while fully respecting passenger privacy rights.

Safety

Another area of serious concern for AAPA airlines are unilateral regulations introduced by national/regional aviation regulators, failing to take into account the international nature of airline operations. In the current instance, the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) now requires that all commercial aircraft be retrofitted with new or modified radio altimeters by July 2023 to maintain their operations to the US, in order for telecommunications companies to power up their 5G networks to the full capacity authorised by the Federal Communications Commission, even as the full effects of 5G on aircraft operations are being studied. Unresolved spectrum issues relating to aeronautical safety services have resulted in flight cancellations, degradations of air traffic management services and interruptions of flight operation.

A comprehensive frequency spectrum strategy in line with ICAO Standards and Recommended Principles (SARPs) is required to support timely availability and protection of adequate spectrum for civil aviation. AAPA believes that introducing regulations to meet

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specific regional or sectoral goals that are counterproductive to aviation safety and recovery, is not in keeping with ICAO's "no country left behind" principle.

AAPA calls on governments, aviation regulators, safety agencies and other stakeholders to support the ICAO frequency spectrum strategy. AAPA also calls on governments to consult with aviation safety regulators, subject matter experts and airspace users, to provide all necessary considerations and to establish regulatory measures to ensure that incumbent aviation systems and services are free from harmful interference.

Sustainability

AAPA member carriers are fully committed to achieving the ambitious industry target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The 41st ICAO Assembly resolved to, amongst others, work together to strive to achieve a collective long-term global aspirational goal for international aviation (LTAG) of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, in support of the UN Paris Agreement's goals, recognizing each State's special circumstances and respective capabilities. The ICAO Assembly further called on Member States to set a coordinated approach in national administrations for policy actions and investment to accelerate the appropriate research, development, deployment and use of cleaner and renewable energy sources for aviation, including the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) and Lower Carbon Aviation Fuel (LCAF).

Achieving the above objectives will require global government support and incentives to ensure that sufficient investment is made by all stakeholders, including fuel suppliers, in infrastructure and frameworks that will provide sufficient quantities of SAF at affordable cost to meet the long term needs of the airline industry.

AAPA calls on governments to work with relevant stakeholders such as fuel suppliers to accelerate the fuel research, certification and development as well as processing technology and feedstock production, and the certification of new aircraft and engines to allow the scaling-up of SAF in sufficient quantities at competitive cost to meet the long term needs of the industry. The Association also renews the call on governments to participate in the CORSIA scheme, to respect the scope and the integrity of CORSIA and refrain from applying duplicative requirements on international aviation CO₂ emissions.

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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 represent 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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