



American Society of
Travel Advisors



CARIBBEAN
HOTEL & TOURISM
ASSOCIATION



Agency Trade Associations Speak with One Voice on Pandemic Recovery

September 10, 2021 - The American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA), Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), Association of Canadian Travel Agencies (ACTA), Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) and European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Associations (ECTAA), collectively representing the hundreds of thousands of people who work at travel agencies and related businesses around the world, call on government leaders globally to align and make safely restarting international travel occur by opening borders an immediate priority.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), in 2019, travel and tourism was one of the world's largest sectors, accounting for 10.4% of global GDP (USD \$9.2 trillion), 10.6% of all jobs (334 million), and was responsible for creating 1 of every 4 new jobs across the world. The COVID-19 pandemic's catastrophic impact on this sector, of which travel agencies, tour operators and other travel-reliant small businesses are a critical part, illustrates the need for standardized entry requirements regarding vaccine verification, testing and other safeguards. This standardization is urgently needed, as the current system is, as described recently by *The Economist*, "a jumble of rules [that] causes confusion, chokes tourism and leaves businesses struggling to work out who can do what and go where."

For well over a year, inconsistent government orders in a wide range of countries intended to slow the spread of COVID-19 have created confusion and uncertainty among travelers, a chilling effect on future bookings and innumerable other challenges for our associations' travel agency members and partners. As an example, recently updated European recommendations on non-essential travel to the EU have thrust the industry and the travelers they serve into a state of confusion. The science behind masking indoors and becoming vaccinated was meant to ease government and public health officials' COVID concerns. Unfortunately, this has not occurred as many requirements have not changed since the start of the pandemic, regardless of whether the traveler is vaccinated or not. With continued uncertainty on the horizon, this sort of news makes those wanting to travel less likely to do so. This has an economic impact on both the global

destinations that are reliant on travelers, as well as the employees and small businesses in the travel industry that are reliant on a functioning global travel system to support their customers. The impact on the global economy is massive.

Given its clear impact on the global economy, an expedited recovery of cross-border travel is critical. ASTA, ABTA, ACTA, CHTA and ECTAA call on government leaders around the world to create an aligned and synchronized response by 1) expeditiously developing clear vaccine and testing standards; 2) loosening entry restrictions for fully vaccinated travelers; and 3) providing the needed economic relief to the travel agency sector suffering for too long the bitter consequences of travel's hard-stop brought on by the pandemic. The value of and need for travel advisors and agents in today's world given the intense complexity of travel is vital now more than ever as consumers around the world attempt to recover from this pandemic with certainty and confidence.

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