HERMES
AIR TRANSPORT ORGANISATION

POSITION PAPER

R21-PP/09
12/04/2021

Resilience and Efficiency through Leadership and Cooperation

Presented by A4A

Airlines for America (A4A) is the principal trade organization for the U.S. airline industry[1] and has consistently supported the need to establish a coordinated COVID-19 pandemic response. We believe that the continued recovery of aviation and increased resilience of global governance frameworks are dependent on two equally critical elements:

- 1) ongoing and frequent engagement by industry stakeholders; and

- 2) improved cooperation and collaboration between governments worldwide.

Additionally, industry actors must commit to having an open dialogue with relevant government agencies regarding the multiple layers of protection – including operational policies and procedures – implemented by the industry to mitigate risk, convey the effectiveness of such measures, and emphasize the need to explore additional risk-based, data-driven measures.

It is vital for the future of the aviation ecosystem that the necessary lessons are learned from the ongoing crisis, in particular the need to provide a more robust and complete scientific evidence base. This should consider the effectiveness of measures taken by national governments at various stages of the pandemic to restrict and contain COVID-19, the operational and technical measures taken by the aviation industry actors to provide a safe travel environment for passengers and crew, and the role that individual travellers play in being part of the solution.

SHORT-TERM GOAL: FINDING A WAY OUT OF THIS CRISIS

The inconsistent approach taken by each region throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has led to fragmented policies regarding travel restrictions and preventative measures. This patchwork not only adds costs that hamper recovery but also creates uncertainty for businesses and travellers throughout the world. To this end, we offer the following short-term initiatives requiring immediate international coordination as the industry continues to navigate through recovery phase challenges:

• Implementation of Global Guidance

It is critical that existing guidance, such as that produced by ICAO CART, is implemented by all participating nation states to allow for a more coordinated approach to the resumption of travel. We need a framework that facilitates travel internationally with the least number of restrictions possible. The further roll-out of vaccination programs globally should help such efforts.

The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of aviation to the global economy (both passenger and cargo transport), along with the recognition by most governments that it is vital to ensure that logistics chains continue to operate with as minimal disruption as possible. This includes the recognition of air crew and transport workers as part of the critical infrastructure of operating air transport services.

- ***Coordination of Vaccine Certification***

  A global protocol on vaccine certification should be platform-neutral and non-discriminatory, allowing individual organizations/sectors to develop their own solutions that most suit their specific requirements. These solutions need to also allow passengers to quickly and easily transfer the required data to the system of preference of the carrier, airport, authority or other organization requiring this information.

  Systems developed at the regional level must consider the work currently taking place at

ICAO and WHO in developing principles and standards that provide greater interoperability. In addition, any future restrictions on travel must recognize a valid proof of vaccination to allow maximum travel freedom with a minimum of restrictions, while allowing for those who have yet to receive the relevant vaccination to travel and have certainty of the restrictions that apply in destination[2].

- ***Rebuilding Public Confidence***
  The availability of information will be key to restoring confidence in the coming months. Passengers need to have sufficient information on what restrictions apply at their destination, as well as the confidence that this will not change without advance warning and recourse. To facilitate this flow of information, greater coordination needs to take place globally, steered via ICAO, in coordination with the WHO. Ideally, this would include an online resource available to national authorities, airlines, airports and other aviation stakeholders, from which relevant information for a particular route can be easily accessed.

- ***Ongoing Information Campaigns on Industry Measures to Mitigate Risk***
  The aviation community must continue to invest in effective awareness and educational campaigns that help inform not only their traditional national agencies but also those who are directly involved in health decisions as well as the traveling public. Ongoing engagement is required to ensure that the steps being taken by the airline industry are recognized and to assure political stakeholders and, most importantly, the traveling public that it is safe to fly.

  In a study undertaken by the Harvard School of Public Health[3], scientists concluded that the multi-layered measures undertaken by airlines – including the use of HEPA filters, the universal use of face coverings, enhanced cleaning protocols and updated operational procedures – significantly reduced the risk of transmission of the COVID- 19 virus. In fact, the research showed that being on an airplane is as safe if not significantly safer than other routine activities like eating at a restaurant or going to the grocery store.

A second phase of the Harvard Aviation Public Health Initiative also showed that layers of protection implemented by airports are significant to lowering the risk of transmission. Studies such as these are vital to push back against the misinformed narrative that flying is a risk for travellers.

The aviation ecosystem has put vast amounts of resources into building resilient, low risk operations. Collectively, we need to ensure that this is well understood across government agencies, as this is particularly important in the prevention of future crises. Data on what is effective and what is not effective will be vital in helping the new aviation ecosystem evolve and be more resilient. Feedback is crucially important in tackling the future evolution of this challenge.

LONG-TERM GOAL: ACHIEVING COLLABORATIVE AND LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

In addition to strengthening and expanding existing international structures (exemplified during this crisis by the ICAO CART process) to allow for greater industry participation and sharing of operational experience and expertise as well as first-hand knowledge on impact and best practice, all governments should re-evaluate their domestic preparedness and crisis response frameworks. There is great room for improvement in involving industry participants in information rounds and providing quick and responsive communications channels, particularly on the operational level.

Leadership and collaboration take on different forms depending on the situation. The EU instituted a network of national transport contact points, first response contact points through which industry could effectively and rapidly signal operational concerns. In the U.S., a group of aviation industry stakeholders, led by A4A, engaged the Harvard School of Public Health (as noted above) to conduct an independent study to evaluate the current layers of protective health measures across the air passenger journey to determine science-based efficacy as well as general and relative risk; consider additional methods to mitigate risk of transmission; and instill public confidence. The project brought together existing research on the aviation environment and protective measures in place with what was known specifically about COVID-19, included contributions from stakeholders across the commercial aviation ecosystem and considered existing ICAO, IATA and government-issued guidelines.

The success of this collaborative project in the U.S. was due to five principles[4] followed in achieving the industry's shared goals in an equitable manner and to the benefit of all stakeholders. The intent of the principles is to rally people's collective instincts to coalesce and contribute to the resolution of a crisis that imperils them all. The five principles of Swarm Leadership applied to this project were as follows:

1. **Unity of mission**: The public health safe resilience of the aviation industry.

2. **Generosity of spirit and action**: Each of the stakeholders had to be willing to contribute their time, commitment, and changes in order to reach combined industry progress.

3. **Everyone stays in their lanes and help others succeed in theirs**: Airlines, manufacturers, and airports had to commit to public health safety in plans and actions to enhance the combined protection of the traveling public.

4. **No Ego - No Blame**: The effort had to be a shared enterprise, in which no one stakeholder dominated the good that evolved, and no one was blaming others for the problems. Sounds easy. It is very difficult in a multi-stakeholder effort in the midst of a high-consequence crisis.

5. **The Foundation of Trusting Relationships**: There are many unknowns in a crisis. There is also a great deal of risk. It is critical to know that others involved are truth tellers, putting their cards and motives on the table and that everyone is rowing in the same direction.

What was remarkable about this achievement with the Harvard Aviation Public Health Initiative was that various entities participating in the collaborative project were direct competitors. And yet, on this topic, they were all ready and willing to collaborate toward a common good: the public health safe resilience of the aviation industry.[5]

This is a model that the aviation community could consider in the future on a global scale. Hermes could take on a leadership role and bring together industry and international organizations to harmonize practices that can then be advocated to governments around the world.

[1] Members of the association are Alaska Airlines, Inc.; American Airlines Group, Inc.; Atlas Air, Inc.; Delta Air Lines, Inc., Federal Express Corporation; Hawaiian Airlines; JetBlue Airways Corp.; Southwest Airlines Co.; United Holdings, Inc.; and United Parcel Service Co. Air Canada is an associate member.

[2] The EU has recognized this principle in its Digital Green Certification proposal, which recommends that passengers traveling with a valid vaccine certificate should not be subject to additional travel restrictions, opting therefore to provide the framework for testing certification as well as recovery from infection certification for travelers.

[3] https://npli.sph.harvard.edu/resources-2/aviation-public-health-initiative-aphi/

[4] There are five principles of Swarm leadership – a phenomenon in which no one is in charge and yet all leaders follow the same principles and rules to accomplish more together than any one leader could alone. The Boston Marathon Bombings required leaders of many agencies – scattered over numerous jurisdictions and with different authorities and priorities – to rapidly respond together to an unknown and complex set of risks, decisions, and actions. This report analyzes their leadership through the event. It seeks to understand how they were able to effectively lead an operation with remarkable results. These outcomes are measured in lives saved, suspects quickly captured, public confidence maintained, and population resilience fostered. These leaders were observed to exhibit "Swarm Intelligence". https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2443/2016/09/Marathon-Bombing-Leadership-Response-Report.pdf

[5] Leonard J. Marcus, Ph.D., National Preparedness Leadership Initiative, a joint program of the Harvard School of Public Health and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Center for Public Leadership.

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