April 23, 2020

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IATA and ICAO must call on airlines to adopt CDC and other health and safety guidelines

On April 21, 2020, IATA issued a press release to call on governments to assist with passenger “confidence-boosting measures in the face of an anticipated slow recovery in demand for air travel.” IATA emphasizes the need for financial relief to airlines and details instances where governments have provided cash payments, loans, and other financial relief to airlines.

However, IATA’s call is lacking details on a key measure that will actually boost the confidence of airline passengers. **This is an area where governments have already acted but in which airlines are the ones who have failed**: prioritizing the health and safety of passengers and communities.

IATA and ICAO must immediately publish best practices for airlines to protect public health and must call on member airlines to implement these life-saving measures immediately.

FlyersRights.org recommends the following measures be required of all member airlines:

1. Social distancing of 6 to 10 feet on airlines and in airports
2. Wearing of N-95 masks by flight attendants
3. Wearing of masks by all passengers
4. Temperature testing of passengers, flight crews, and other airline personnel in contact with the public
5. Cleaning and sanitizing of the cabin and other surfaces in contact with passengers
6. Encouraging the public to not use air travel except for essential purposes

To gain the flying public’s trust, airlines should also process full refunds during this time to financially disincentivize non-essential travel while the pandemic still claims thousands of lives daily. For any country in which an airline receives a bailout or substantial financial assistance from the government, a refusal to make responsible passengers whole via refunds will appear hypocritical and will ultimately further erode public confidence in the airlines’ commitment to passenger health and well-being.

To date, airlines have been slow to implement health precautions, instead prioritizing revenue and government aid over the needs of passengers and public health. We call on you to take bold steps to correct this in order to achieve the public confidence that the airlines seek.

Sincerely,

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