HARMONISING AIR TRAVEL POLICY WHITE PAPER

FAQs

08 May 2022

SECTION 1: CORE MESSAGES

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SECTION 1: KEY DETAILS

1. Saudi Arabia is launching a global initiative in the form of a policy White Paper, aimed at making the travel process **simpler and easier for passengers, especially during public health emergencies**

2. The White Paper proposes the introduction of a universal framework to **harmonize health information protocols**, with the objective of limiting the impact of passenger traffic losses during health emergency situations through ensuring a more resilient system.

3. The White Paper is the **first of its kind** that places passengers at the centre of the aviation policy objective

4. The White Paper comprises **four core pillars**: 1) a harmonized reporting system for all countries, 2) communication systems for states and other stakeholders, 3) new governance and coordination mechanisms, and 4) compliance mechanisms.

Key words / phrases

First of its kind + Putting the passenger first – no other aviation policy seeks to place air passengers at the centre of its objectives. A simpler, more effective global system will promote trust and resilience

Ambitious – this policy aims to encourage collaboration between stakeholders across the aviation ecosystem in a way that has never been seen before

Future-oriented – This policy is borne out of the challenges we have witnessed with COVID. But it is not a COVID policy. It is a policy designed to support resilience in the global aviation response to any future health crises that may occur and simplify current health related protocols for passengers.

Policy Context

- External shocks have greatly impacted air transport services and subsequent economic growth. Covid-19 has severely impacted air traffic and passenger travel across the globe and, as a result, passenger traffic is not expected to return to pre-2019 levels until 2024, and air transport remains vulnerable to other future global health crises.

Policy Structure

- The framework comprises the development of four core pillars designed to improve the global response to future health emergencies in air transport:

    1) a harmonized reporting system for all countries
    2) communication systems for states and other stakeholders
    3) new governance and coordination mechanisms
    4) compliance mechanisms.

Estimated policy impact

- The policy framework will help to limit the magnitude of lost traffic due to a health crisis by allowing states to rapidly exchange information on their evolving situations and through implementation of the "safe flight" concept.

- In addition, it will help to increase the speed of recovery for passenger traffic following the development and roll out of appropriate treatments (such as vaccines).

- Based on analysis conducted on the period March 2020 to December 2021, the policy's expected beneficial economic impact (had it been enacted, in a base case scenario), was estimated at approximately USD 1.1 trillion.

Alignment to ongoing global work

- The objective of the policy initiative is not to build the materials and structures for the four proposed pillars from scratch, but to work closely with leading global aviation stakeholders to build on the previous and current work of CAPSCA, ICAO, its Member States, and regional bodies

- By proposing and leading the global efforts to establish such a framework to harmonise health requirements and ease travel for passengers, this policy white paper illustrates the Kingdom's commitment to support global efforts to enhance resilience the air transport sector in direct alignment to resolutions undertaken at the ICAO High-Level Conference on Covid-19.

YouGov Research (key relevant extracts)

USA:

- A majority (56%) of Americans say that governments did not work well together to facilitate travel during the pandemic
- Only a third (36%) of Americans think the aviation industry is well-prepared for another public health crisis
- 1 in 3 (32%) Americans say confusion over health requirements will stop them from booking a trip in 2022

GCC:

- More than two thirds (68%) of people in the Gulf chose not to travel in 2021 because of Covid-related requirements
- Nearly half (47%) of people in the Gulf say confusion over health requirements will stop them from travelling in 2022

Italy:

- Most people in Italy (61%) say they chose not to travel in 2021 due to Covid-related travel requirements
- 40% of people in Italy say confusing health requirements will stop them from travelling this year

UK:

- Two thirds (65%) of Brits put off travel in 2021 due to Covid-related requirements
- Most people in the UK (70%) say that countries did NOT work together to make it easier for people to travel over the course of the pandemic
- More than two thirds of people in the UK say the aviation industry is not well-prepared for another health crisis
- 40% of people in the UK say confusing health requirements will stop them from travelling this year

General

Why has Saudi Arabia sponsored this white paper?

- Saudi Arabia, alongside all other countries across the world, was deeply affected by the impact of COVID. An opportunity exists for the Kingdom to lead a policy initiative that sets a structure to reduce the potential disruption caused by a crisis such as COVID in the future
- Saudi Arabia has already undertaken some leading work in this area from a practical perspective, through work to integrate the Tawakkulna app with IATA's global travel pass. Accordingly, the experience will prove practical in the implementation of this policy

What does Saudi Arabia have to gain by spearheading this initiative?

- This is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the Kingdom's capabilities as a coordinator in the aviation ecosystem, while also making a positive impact for all countries (and specifically, passengers) across the globe
- This work can help to set the basis for Saudi Arabia to be an active and legitimate contributor to aviation policy in the years ahead

What is Saudi Arabia doing differently than other international and national bodies to harmonize global travel/How is the Harmonising Air Travel policy different to the G20 discussions?

- It is important to be clear that the Kingdom is not attempting to re-invent the wheel with this policy. Multiple leading aviation stakeholders such as ICAO, CAPSCA and IATA have led work that is highly relevant to this policy
- This policy proposal is unique in its attempt to align work already being done by Member States and sector bodies within a coordinated and harmonised framework, that promotes collaboration
- Saudi Arabia takes note and welcomes the recent work undertaken by the 2022 G20 Health Working Group (HWG) relating to harmonizing global health protocols for safe international travel. An opportunity exists for the HWG to work with our policy team to support the introduction and implementation of key recommendations into our framework

What is the process post Future Aviation Forum for the policy to be ratified?

- The first goal is to raise visibility of the policy white paper among Member States at the Future Aviation Forum. The Kingdom is hopeful that Member States will view the proposal in a favourable light, and be willing to support us in developing the policy
- The policy team will continue to build on the work already undertaken, and will be grateful to receive feedback, comments, and criticisms from Member States regarding the White Paper to help improve the quality and viability
- Following the Forum, the team intends to work towards the development of a Working Paper, in coordination with ICAO, other key aviation stakeholders, and Member States
- The core goal is for the Working Paper to be discussed (and adopted) at the ICAO General Assembly later this year

Are there barriers to adoption?

- This is an ambitious policy proposal that will require the buy-in and collaboration between a range of stakeholders within and external to the aviation sector, such as the health (WHO) sectors and tourism (UNWTO) sectors
- As a result, the most complex barrier to the policy will be achieving consensus on the policy and commitment from across the Member States
- From a practical perspective, adoption may take place on a step-by-step basis in alignment with Member States in accordance with their ability to adopt the framework.

What if other member states refuse to participate in the process?

- This is an ambitious policy proposal that will require the buy-in and collaboration between a range of stakeholders within and external to the aviation sector.
- The most complex barrier to the policy will be achieving consensus on the policy and commitment from across the Member States for its implementation.
- After extensive collaboration with experts in the field of aviation, the next step in the policy-making process is a broader consultation with fellow member states, and key international organizations which includes listening to any concerns that may arise and propose constructive solutions to make travel easier for passengers.
- Implementation may happen step by step, and also on a voluntary basis in case of contentious elements.

Ensuring policy success

- The policy was written following extensive consultation with experts in the field of aviation, so we know that the policy addresses the key issues.
- The team will continue working to bring the policy to implementation.
- Inclusivity is a core component of the policy-making process. Therefore, ensuring ample consultation with fellow member states from ICAO will be an important step.
- Universal adoption will be crucial in the success of this policy.

How is the Harmonising Air Travel concept different to other platforms?

- The Harmonising Air Travel policy white paper offers a framework and initiatives that will be developed based on alignment (and with the buy-in) of all the key authoritative aviation agencies, rather than just a few.
- Data and information on health requirements to travel and statistics shall be supplied directly by the relevant public health authorities of all Member-States and thus the framework will be supplied with the most up-to-date and accurate information that is shared with all actors.

Which countries would be eligible for participation in the Harmonising Air Travel policy?

- All ICAO Member States would be eligible for participation in the Harmonising Air Travel policy.

How will the Harmonising Air Travel policy impact travellers, airlines and airports?

- Impact on travellers – more seamless travel due to easily accessible, accurate and up-to-date health requirements to travel from point of original to point of arrival. Key aspects include:
  - Safer travel and information protection for passengers and staff
  - Less unpredictable and stressful travel experience
  - A more personable experience
  - Can offer passengers guarantee to travel while checking-in, with no unexpected problems when arriving at the airport.
- Impact on airlines – access to straightforward and accurate information from passengers and the latest health requirements from health authorities at destination countries, ensuring a greater safety for airline staff at airports and onboard aircraft
- Impact on airports – more organized and structured processes, streamlined end-to-end processes, transform operations so that operational costs are reduced, a steadier flow of passengers in and out (fewer peaks and troughs in passenger volumes)

Who will fund this initiative?

- Saudi Arabia has taken the lead as the architect of the initial process, including the development of the policy white paper
- Should the proposal receive an adequate level of buy-in from Member States, it will be necessary to carefully determine how the proposed governance, coordination and technical functions of the framework should be funded through to the point of implementation and beyond.
- Importantly, the fund will need strong governance, tight control, and transparency with regards to disbursements. A Steering Committee made up of contributing Member-States could be responsible for overseeing this fund.
- Further discussions will need to take place between the contributing members of the Steering Committee to determine how the implementation of the initiatives will be financed, and who will finance specific components.

Does this policy seek to replace initiatives that are already in place? For example, the IATA Travel Pass.

- No, it does not seek to replace any existing national or industry led initiative, framework or tool or to impose itself on any sovereign state or organization as obligatory to implement.
- The policy's aim is to ensure that each existing initiative found at national or regional level can be translated/converted seamlessly into the Harmonising Air Travel framework so that health requirement information can be accurately shared and coordinated to the rest of the world. The policy seeks to build on these initiatives.

Has WHO been involved in this policy?

- The WHO is a critical stakeholder in the successful implementation of the Harmonising Air Travel policy
- Representatives from WHO have been briefed on the policy and its context
- The intention is to continue working closely with WHO and other key organisations after the Forum to promote collaboration and coordination in terms of the policy implementation

How will the Harmonising Air Travel policy impact Governments?

- It is going to help governments communicate more effectively what their regulations are, with added visibility and less work.
- By taking uncertainly out of the equations for travellers, it will help governments to retain and increase their air traffic

Is this just about Covid? Isn't this over?

- No, this policy is not just about Covid. It is easy, given the disruption of the past two years, to assume that this policy is a direct response to Covid. However, this policy seeks to provide a solution that promotes simpler, easier and more enjoyable travel for future decades
- This policy will promote resilience within our industry to future shocks, helping us to better withstand and navigate future crises

How did you come to the figure of 1.1 trillion?

- Our team undertook a preliminary but detailed financial analysis focusing on the period March 2020 to December 2021, when COVID restrictions were most severe.
- Our analysis indicated that had the policy been enacted, the expected beneficial economic impact, in a base case scenario, was estimated at approximately USD 1.1 trillion

Do you expect the new policy to result in more travel?

- This policy aims to build more resilience into the current system, to provide a simpler, easier and more enjoyable travel experience for passengers
- With such a structure in place, travellers that may have been discouraged from travelling by confusing restrictions would be more likely to travel
- It is important to note that this policy seeks to build a framework for "normal" times, and in times of health emergencies. It will enable simpler travel under "normal" conditions, supporting the potential for more travel. In health emergency situations, resilience created by the policy will reduce losses in volumes to the extent that we have seen recently during Covid

Will the new policy also cover travel requirements for children?

- Yes, the policy will cover travel requirements for all passengers