12th May 2020

WTTC unveils “Safe Travels” – new global protocols to restart the Travel & Tourism sector

New measures unveiled to re-establish confidence in Travel & Tourism

London, UK: The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) which represents the global Travel & Tourism private sector has unveiled a range of new worldwide measures to restart the sector.

The measures have been designed to rebuild confidence among consumers so they can travel safely once the restrictions are lifted.

The new Safe Travels protocols provide consistency to destinations and countries as well as guidance to travel providers, operators, and travellers, about the new approach to health and hygiene in the post COVID-19 world.

The health and safety of travellers and workers is put at the heart of the new global protocols, which have been drawn up by WTTC Members. Based on the best available medical evidence, following guidelines from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), they also avoid the emergence of multiple standards, which would only delay the sector’s recovery.

Gloria Guevara, WTTC President & CEO, said: “We have learned from the past, especially after the tragedy of 9/11, where the lack of coordination among governments and with the private sector caused long-lasting travel disruption, higher costs and a longer recovery time.

“Coordination and alignment within the Travel & Tourism sector is vital to ensure that robust global measures are put in place to help rebuild confidence and which are jointly embraced by the governments and private sector.

“We are delighted that for the first time ever, the global private sector has aligned around these new Safe Travels protocols which will create consistency across the sector. Now we are calling on governments to adopt them so that they can be implemented globally and restore much-needed confidence in order to restart the Travel & Tourism sector.”

Evidence from WTTC’s Crisis Readiness report, which looked at 90 different types of crises, highlights the importance of public-private cooperation to ensure that smart policies and effective communities are in place to enable a more resilient Travel & Tourism sector.
WTTC, is devising the new Safe Travels protocols following close consultation with its Members, as well as industry associations like Airports Council International (ACI), Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA), to bring confidence back and set clear expectations of what travellers may front in their next trip.

These will apply across the main industries within Travel & Tourism including hospitality, aviation, airports, cruise operators, retail, transportation, MICE and tour operators amongst others.

Detailed discussions are taking place with key stakeholders and organisations in each industry within the sector to ensure maximum buy-in, alignment and practical implementation, with hospitality and retail guidelines being released today.

The WTTC initiative has been backed by top CEOs and business leaders from across the Travel & Tourism sector.

Chris Nassetta, WTTC Chairman and Hilton’s President & CEO, said: “We see green shoots of hope emerging as our global community turns its attention toward recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. But we know that travellers will only venture out into the world again when they feel it is safe to do so, making it critically important that we give them the confidence and peace of mind they need.

“The global protocols WTTC has laid out are designed to align the travel and tourism industry around consistent health and safety guidelines that will help protect travellers wherever their journey takes them.”

Federico J. González, Radisson Hospitality President & CEO, said: “We need to make sure that the travel industry speaks the same language and each consumer understands what safety means in hotels, regardless of their location. Having a common worldwide protocol will allow consumers to recognise the same safety standards wherever they travel.

“The WTTC Safe Travels protocols will make this same language possible for the benefit of everybody in this industry. This is the reason why Radisson Hotel Group fully supports this initiative and is looking forward to helping expand the WTTC Safe Travels protocols as much as possible, across the globe.”

Keith Barr, InterContinental Hotels Group Chief Executive, said: “As an industry, we have always made the safety and wellbeing of guests and colleagues our top priority. IHG is proud to support the WTTC in shaping this best practice guidance in areas such as cleanliness and hygiene, all underpinned by the most relevant training and preparedness for hotel teams.

“This important work illustrates how our industry can come together to provide the reassurance and confidence that will be so important as people return to travel.”
Brett Tollman, Travel Corporation Chief Executive, said: “Our industry faces an existential threat. We need to define new protocols and measures to get people’s confidence to travel again, for leisure and business. WTTC is best positioned to help work with us and governments to define those together.

“We believe WTTC is best suited to work with all governments, the WHO and other necessary organisations to agree how we are going to operate in the new ‘abnormal’. Let’s put our differences aside, come together and expeditiously with WTTC define these new protocols and measures, get them in front of governments, get them signed off and let’s get out there, convincing people to travel again with all of us.”

Jane Sun, CEO of Trip.com Group, said: “For us and our partners, the safety of travellers is always our top priority. We are more than happy to see that WTTC is setting global standards to ensure a safe experience and bringing confidence back to all travellers.”

Alex Zozaya, Apple Leisure Group President, said: “I’m deeply concerned about the travel today all over the world, we must regain the trust on the traveller. We have to avoid the confusion and the uncertainty that prevails in the market today. The WTTC has created these universal protocols, that hopefully, as us, you will embrace happily. We thank them for their support.”

Pansy Ho, Shun Tak Holdings Group Executive Chairman and Managing Director, said: “Shun Tak, being a committed investor in regional transportation, integrated hotel and destinations across Hong Kong, Macau and China, fully supports WTTC’s efforts in driving the rebound of the tourism sector.

“We stand in solidarity with WTTC to embrace travel and tourism once again, under the valuable guidelines set out in the ‘Global Guidance’, putting safety, health, security and sustainability as priorities as we unite to revitalize our industry.”

Gabriel Escarrer, Meliá Hotels International Executive Vice Chairman & CEO, said: “Safe travel and health confidence are the new priorities, and are here to stay: the pandemic is a common concern for companies and destinations throughout the world.

“It is a shared responsibility for us to all work together and offer global health and safety standards against COVID-19. We therefore welcome the Global standards approved by WTTC, which belong to all of us.”

Kike Sarasola, Room Mate President and Founder, said: “The WTTC is promoting very good initiatives and I really think that’s the way to do it. We have to work together. We as a private sector know how to deal with our sector. Public sector should listen to us; we want to help.”

Sabina Fluxà, Iberostar Hotels & Resorts Vice-Chairman and CEO, said: “This crisis has shown the importance of global coordination to overcome the vulnerability of the tourism industry and become more resilient. We cannot work with heterogeneous measures depending on each country: we must face the new scenario with global standards that guarantee the sustainability of our sector.”
“It is very important to keep an eye on the medium and long term and incorporate health safety as a new pillar of global sustainability. Health and environment will be the key axes of a resilient tourism policy.”

Carlos Muñoz, Managing Director, Hotelbeds: “This important measure not only gives our sector greater clarity on COVID-19 response best practice, it will also give greater confidence to travellers when booking a hotel and thus help the tourism sector recover more quickly. That’s why at Hotelbeds we will back this initiative and additionally are working on including information about this in our distribution for travelers to consider when reserving a hotel.”

Frank Rainieri, Grupo Puntacana Chairman and Founder, said: “We have to congratulate the World Travel & Tourism Council for its leadership and publishing these global guidelines for the re-opening of our industry.

“This pandemic has done significant damage to the value of our industry and we must lead this process of recovery and ensure people that the hospitality sector is safe with the best operational guidance and protocols to make our sector unique. The WTTC will help to renew the consumer’s confidence in travel which is the most important goal now to every one of us.”

Shirley Tan, Rajawali Property Group CEO, said: “Tourism recovery is vital to prevent millions of people from being driven into extreme poverty. Rajawali Property Group, one of the leading hotel investment and development companies in Southeast Asia, fully supports WTTC global initiatives to bring together governments and private sectors to put in place critical global standards and protocols to ensure safe travel, accelerate global tourism recovery, and reshape travel & tourism industry for the future.”

Hugo Desenzani, Libertador Hotels CEO, said: “For the first time in recent history we face a shutdown of travel as we know it. The good news is that no pandemic will take away our deeply rooted desire to explore and discover and we will travel again soon.

“Because a global problem requires a global solution, we fully support the WTTC and their initiative of consistent, global safety guidelines, which will allow our guests to travel and feel safe.”

WTTC has divided the new guidance into five pillars including restarting operations; ensuring the traveller experience is safe and secure; rebuilding trust and confidence; innovation; and implementing enabling policies.

Measures being announced today include:

**Hotels/Hospitality**

Key measures include:

- Revisit guidance for cleaning teams for all areas of the hotel with a specific focus on high-frequency touch points, such as room key cards
- Ensure social distancing for guests through signage and guidelines including lifts
- Retrain staff in infection control, social distancing and enhanced hygiene measures, including hand washing and the use of masks and gloves
- All extraneous items should be removed throughout the hotel
- Integrate technologies to enable automation, such as introducing contactless payments where possible
● Offer room service using no-contact delivery methods
● Have clear, consistent and enhanced communication with customers on new health and hygiene safety protocols, both digitally and physically at hotels
● Safe reopening of Food and Beverage outlets and Meeting and Events spaces with specific actions to ensure social distancing, disinfection and food safety.

Retail
Key Measures include:
● Deep cleaning regimes
● Staff should be fully familiar and trained in the new policies, including social distancing, the use of thermal scanning and the wearing of face masks
● Social distancing should be observed in stores through special visual markers
● Minimise touch points by introducing digital maps, digital queue management, e-menus, virtual personal shopping and roving concierges
● Promote contactless payments and email receipts wherever possible by providing complimentary WIFI to encourage take up
● Hand sanitisers at shop entrances and exits, as well as at intervals inside premises and in bathrooms.
● In cafes, restaurants and other food outlets, all menus to be available digitally
● Special attention placed to seating and queue management in line with social distancing requirements
● Capacity limits should be introduced in retail car parks to prevent overcrowding.

Additional and separate measures for the Aviation and Cruise sectors are still in development and will be announced in due course.

Both sectors, which have always had high health and safety standards, are reassessing their protocols, with new measures around hygiene, deep cleansing and social distancing being analysed.

According to WTTC’S 2020 Economic Impact Report, during 2019, Travel & Tourism was responsible for one in 10 jobs (330 million total), making a 10.3% contribution to global GDP and generating one in four of all new jobs.

Ends

For full details about “Safe Travels”, please visit wttc.org

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Editor’s Notes:

WTTC has created nine overarching principles & objectives for the Travel & Tourism Sector in the post-lockdown and recovery stage:

1. Have the sector lead the definition of industry regulation as Travel & Tourism moves from crisis management to recovery
2. Put the safety, health and security of travellers and the Travel & Tourism workforce at the core of the development of global standards
3. Ensure coherence in the approach and development of new global standards through a coordinated, collaborative, and transparent approach within the Travel & Tourism sector
4. Share harmonised and consistent standards and guidelines across destinations and countries.
5. Collaborate with key actors across the Travel & Tourism supply and value chain to ensure readiness to restart operations
6. Ensure standards and guidelines implemented are aligned with governmental and public health requirements and supported by medical evidence.
7. Rebuild trust and confidence with travellers through effective communication & marketing; letting them know the protocols and guidelines implemented and assurances available to keep them safe.
8. Relax and lift travel restrictions once the public health threat has been contained.
9. Advocate for the implementation of enabling policies from financial relief to visa facilitation and incentives to destination promotion to support the recovery and demand re-generation for the sector.