WTTC warns country-wide border closures could seriously stall global economic recovery

Advises regional and local measures only to combat COVID-19 spikes

Travel & Tourism sector will help power the global economic recovery

London, UK: The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has warned governments around the world that further country-wide border closures could seriously jeopardise global economic recovery.

WTTC is urging authorities to take a more carefully calibrated approach and introduce localised measures, and only when necessary. This would avoid blanket restrictions, prevent stalling the fragile economic recovery and not cripple the already bruised and battered Travel & Tourism sector.

WTTC would support the opening of city to city ‘air corridors’ between global financial centres, such as London and Frankfurt and New York. This would help restart business travel which is crucial to kickstarting the economic recovery.

Unfortunately, a number of countries around the world are experiencing local coronavirus spikes. This is forcing a re-think by a number of governments which are now having to consider reintroducing tough and unwelcome new ‘anti-travel’ measures.

According to the latest statistics from Johns Hopkins University in the US, the worldwide COVID-19 death toll has passed 606,000 while the number of confirmed coronavirus cases has now surpassed more than 14.5 million.

Gloria Guevara, WTTC President & CEO, said: “Governments should not close off access to other countries in their entirety. Only regional border measures should be imposed if essential, so that the recovery of a country’s whole economy is not jeopardised in future.

“The establishment of ‘air corridors’ between financial centres where infection levels are low, such as between London and New York, would provide a vital boost to business travel and aid the economic recovery.
“Enforcing country-wide restrictions is a blunt instrument which benefits no one; neither travellers, the local population, the economy or the Travel & Tourism sector which has been left reeling from the impact of worldwide travel restrictions.

“Such measures could undo the significant efforts to revive Travel & Tourism, which has recently shown encouraging signs of emerging from the worst of the pandemic, and which in turn has brought hope to millions of people around the world who depend upon the sector for their livelihoods.

“Taking a more carefully calibrated approach to strategically combating coronavirus spikes with local measures rather than country-wide closures, will contain COVID-19 and preserve a country’s attempt to kick-start their economy by continuing to attract travellers to unaffected areas.

“Travel & Tourism is critical to powering that economic recovery, generating one in four of all new jobs last year. Our 2020 Economic Impact Report shows that during 2019 the sector supported one in 10 jobs of all jobs (330 million total) and made a massive 10.3% contribution to global GDP.

“It is perfectly possible to fight COVID-19 and support the economic recovery through the Travel & Tourism sector at the same time. We urge governments to consider only local lockdowns as the key to opening the door to a successful way forward.”

Restoring business travel, especially via transatlantic flights, is key to help kickstart the economic recovery. WTTC research shows that for two of the world’s top business centres, business travellers account for one U.S Dollar in every three spent in New York and one pound Sterling out of every four spent in London.

WTTC has also called for more consistent COVID-19 travel rules to be adopted by European countries to counter confusion by travellers and holidaymakers who faced a baffling array of different types of travel rules advice.

The organisation has been concerned that the uneven patchwork of COVID-19 national border restrictions would deter travellers and suppress the resurgence of the Travel & Tourism sector. However, learning from response to past pandemic outbreaks, governments could avoid delaying the much-needed economic recovery.

However, WTTC warned that unless European governments make a greater effort to align their policies it will cause the fragile recovery to stutter and slowdown, putting 16 million jobs in Travel & Tourism at risk.

Research from WTTC showed that every 2.7% increase in travellers would generate or recover one million jobs in the sector. Governments working together with the right coordinated measures could stimulate an increase in travel by as much as 27%, recreating a massive 10 million jobs in Travel and Tourism.
WTTC also recently issued a ten-point Traveller Guideline for Safe & Seamless Travel including testing and contact tracing to ensure people can enjoy Safe Travels in the ‘new normal’.

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