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# Minister Fikile Mbalula: Alert Level 1 Regional and International Travel in Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic

2 Oct 2020

Statement by the Minister of Transport regarding Alert Level 1 Regional and International Travel

Exactly 188 days ago, civil aviation activities as we know them came to a screeching halt. Between the 01 April – 30 May 2020, when the country was on Level 4, a total of 19 206 passengers landed at our airports.

Most of these flights were mainly for essential services and the repatriation and evacuation of foreign nationals and locals respectively.

When domestic travel commenced at the beginning of June 2020 during alert Level 3, this number went up to 391 720 passengers that landed at approved airports in total.

The statistics for the month of September 2020 will only be reconciled a few weeks down the line.

Our statistics show that in the past five (5) years the average number of passengers traversing between our airports amounted to an average of 1,8 million per month with the highest recorded figures indicating that over 2 million passengers per month land at our airports during peak travel seasons such as the Easter and Christmas periods. These figures are not meant to shock you but are merely a demonstration of the real impact of COVID-19 on the civil aviation industry activities and businesses since the World Health Organization announced the global outbreak of this virus in the first quarter of the year 2020. In line with the announcement of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, as well as the Regulations issued by the Minister of COGTA, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, international travel is now permitted as of 01 October 2020. It is therefore my immense pleasure to announce the Directions which are effectively setting in motion and signaling the reopening of Regional and International travel from and into South Africa.

### International flights

With effect from 01 October 2020, international passenger flights, inbound into our country from the African continent and from other countries outside the African continent, as determined in accordance with the list determined by the Minister of Home Affairs following conditions: Compliance Requirements for Operators (Airline and Commercial Operators)

1. A Foreign Operator (meaning an airline) is required to submit procedures that show the level of compliance with South African COVID-19 legislation for approval to the South African Civil Aviation Authority.
2. Foreign Air Ambulance Services are permitted to transport COVID-19 positive patients; provided that they obtain approval from the Department of Health, a permit issued by the Department of Transport, and comply with the Department of Health Protocols and the Air Ambulance Guidelines that are in place.
3. An Operator shall not board any passenger without a valid negative Polymerase Chain Reaction ("PCR") or a valid COVID-19 negative test certificate.
4. South African authorities reserve the right to verify the authenticity of presented PCR or COVID-19 test certificates.
5. Operators are allowed to provide catering on-board an aircraft, i.e. provided that they take all risk mitigation, health and safety measures to contain the spread of COVID-19, including the provision of pre-packed meals.

### **Compliance Requirements Relating to Passengers**

1. Passengers are required to wear face masks at all times and may only remove face masks during emergencies or when instructed by cabin crew to take them off, and must observe social distancing, ensure hand washing, and sanitize regularly.
2. A passenger who is unable to wear a face mask due to an underlying medical condition must submit a medical certificate from a registered medical practitioner to the Operator prior to departure.
3. A child under the age of two years may be exempted from wearing a face mask. This is because masks can restrict breathing for small children as their airways are smaller than older children and adults.
4. A passenger must provide to the Operator a negative PCR test certificate or a valid COVID-19 negative test certificate, obtained not more than 72 hours before the date of travel, from an accredited laboratory and in line with the World Health Organization requirements.
5. An "immunity passport", "risk-free certificate" or "passport immunity" in respect of COVID-19 is not acceptable. 6. If a passenger is symptomatic, the necessary protocols of the Department of Health will be followed.
7. In the event of the passenger's failure, for whatever reason, to submit a certificate as proof of a negative PCR test certificate or a valid COVID-19 negative test certificate upon arrival in South Africa, the passenger shall be subjected to a compulsory quarantine at a government designated facility as contemplated for in Health Directions, at his or her own cost.
8. International travel from countries listed as having a high COVID-19 infection and transmission rate, is prohibited, except for business travel, which may be allowed with the approval of the Cabinet member responsible for Home Affairs, in which case such passengers must comply with the stipulated requirements.
9. A passenger in transit must be in possession of a negative PCR test certificate or a valid COVID-19 negative test certificate, obtained not more than 72 hours before the date of travel, from an accredited laboratory.

10. A passenger in transit who displays symptoms of COVID-19 must, upon arrival and under the direction of Ports Health: (a) Be taken through primary and secondary screening, including COVID-19 testing, where applicable; (b) Be quarantined, at own cost, if a positive test result is obtained. In this case, all Department of Health protocols and Department of Transport guidelines must be adhered to.

### **Compliance Requirements Relating to Crew**

1. Crew members are required to wear face masks at all times, except when conducting a safety briefing and during an emergency.
2. Crew members shall upon arrival in South Africa be subjected to health protocols as contemplated for in Health Directions.
3. An Operator must ensure the following risk mitigation measures for crew members: (a) conduct risk assessments to ensure that crew members are fit and proper before they undertake their travel duties and mitigate the risk of COVID-19 crew infections; and (b) ensure that crew members are protected whilst on duty.

International Schedule and Charter Flights International scheduled and Charter flights carrying passengers are allowed through the following airports: 1. OR Tambo International Airport; 2. King Shaka International Airport; and 3. Cape Town International Airport.

### **International Outbound Flights**

With regard to international outbound flights the following applies:

1. subject to the travel requirements of a country of destination, a passenger must provide to the Operator a negative PCR test certificate or a valid COVID-19 negative test certificate from an accredited laboratory and
2. an Operator is responsible to ensure that passengers comply with COVID-19 requirements of the country of destination.

A Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) has been issued that informs pilots who are planning their flights to note and comply with South Africa's legal requirements in line with Alert Level 1. His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa reminded us that the virus is still with us; and therefore, any careless actions from our side will determine if we remain on Alert Level 1 for longer or not.

We are exercising extra caution as most countries who have previously witnessed a drop in the number of infections suffer what health experts call a second wave.

We are encouraged by the use of technology that in our airports, in the form of Smart Security checkpoint. This technology digitises the security check process, speeds up passenger progress through security, and further enhance security using state-of-the-art scanners. This technology is impressive, reduces human contact and we have been verily advised that this is one of the ways of reducing the spread of Covid19.

The utilization of this technology ensures that there is no physical pat-downs of passengers, who often set off security alarms because the scanning technology is much better at detecting objects that should not be carried on or around the person.

For the sake of our economy and the lives of all South Africans as well as those citizens who do business with our country, we urge you to cooperate with all civil aviation operators as they make the best out of a very difficult situation. The responsibility is upon each and

everyone of us using the civil aviation network to ensure that we adhere to the set standards issued by several government departments such as the Department of Health, the Department of Transport, the Department of Employment and Labour and their respective agencies.

### **Cross-Border Road Transport**

Cross-Border Road Passengers from all countries in the continent is permitted and travelers can only enter through permitted land ports determined by Minister of Home Affairs and would be subjected to all health protocols determined by Minister of Health. MARITIME As of October 01, 2020 all commercial sea ports are operational. Signing on crew must produce a negative Polymerase Chain Reaction ("PCR") test certificate or a valid certificate of COVID-19 negative test results, obtained not more than 72hours before the date of travel, from an accredited laboratory and in line with World Health Organization requirements at the first South African Port of Entry.

Cruise ships are prohibited from calling at any of the South African sea ports, except the disembarkation of returning- (a) South African crew; (b) South African citizens; or (c) holders of South African permanent residence permits.

Passenger ships are allowed to call at any South African sea port only for the following purposes: (a) Disembarking returning South African citizens and holders of South African permanent residence permits; (b) Replenishing fuel, stores and provisions; (c) medical evacuation; and (d) search and rescue.

### **PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

Alert level 1 brings no changes for public transport, however we are closely monitoring the situation and the following conditions are still applicable:

- Mini-buses, midi-buses and buses are only permitted to carry a maximum of 70% of their licensed passenger carrying capacity when undertaking long distance travel. Long distance is defined as any distance in excess of 200km irrespective of whether it crosses Provincial boundaries or not.
- Short-distance public transport of 200km or less, for buses, mini-buses, midi-buses, e-hailing services, metered taxis, shuttle service, chauffeur driven vehicles and scholar transport vehicles is permitted to carry 100% of their maximum license passenger capacity.

As we continue to confront this pandemic, we should remain vigilant and follow all necessary health protocols. Indeed, we have walked a long walk through this pandemic to easily let our guard down; as such the words by one of our great Statesman, Nelson Mandela are as apposite as they were then and must resonate with each and everyone of us. Madiba once said: "I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended". It has been a long and difficult 6 months since the first declaration of Covid-19 disaster. We have been through the rough seas and have hit some turbulences during this period. Together as a Nation, we have held hands and traversed through this disaster. As we enter Alert level 1, we dare not linger but must remain resilient, cautious, adhere to health protocols and adjust to the new normal as we simultaneously prepare for the next normal.

I thank you...

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