



Recommendation on COVID-19 Certificates for International Travel

The **World Committee on Tourism Ethics**, an independent and impartial body of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), responsible for the promotion of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, as well as the evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of its principles;

Whereas the World Committee on Tourism Ethics is saddened by the significant loss of human lives and the suffering of millions of people around the world as the result of the COVID-19 outbreak;

Highlighting the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on international tourism resulting in an estimated loss of USD 1.3 trillion in export revenues and putting between 100 and 120 million direct tourism jobs at risk¹, which has disproportionately affected women and young people;

Recognizing the urgent need to restart tourism in view of the summer tourist season in the Northern Hemisphere, which precedes the tourist season on the Southern Hemisphere, in order to mitigate the negative economic and social effects on tourism destinations, local populations and tourism workers;

Acknowledging the existence of various initiatives concerning health or COVID-19 related certificates and passports² as well as a number of bilateral agreements between states with a view to facilitating the entry of vaccinated persons into their respective territories;

Considering international cooperation and global coordination as well as interoperability to be of highest importance for the implementation of these certificates worldwide;

Taking into account the right of national authorities to regulate the use of these certificates within their territories, in line with the principle of subsidiarity;

Calling upon the relevant national and international authorities to achieve a broad vaccine distribution and roll-out, by all useful means, while deploying a high degree of solidarity towards less advantaged countries and protecting local populations in this regard;

Noting that technological, sanitary, and legal matters related to COVID-19 certificates do not fall under the remit of this Committee.

¹ "Tourism suffers its deepest crisis in 2020 with a drop of 74% in international arrivals" ([UNWTO Barometer, year 19, issue 1, January 2021](#))

² Examples: [AOKPass](#) (International Chamber of Commerce), [Travel Pass](#) (IATA), [Common Pass](#) (World Economic Forum), [Digital Green Certificate](#) (European Union)

Acknowledging the applicability to this context of the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005), and the temporary recommendations³ issued by World Health Organization (WHO) under the IHR in reference to the public health emergency of international concern, encouraging States Parties to “implement coordinated, time-limited, risk-based, and evidence-based approaches for health measures in relation to international traffic” while considering the “limited (although growing) evidence about the performance of vaccines in reducing transmission”.

Having in mind the principles and rules protective of personal data, which are of particular importance in the matter of health protection, notably the Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

Reaffirming in this context the validity and importance of the UNWTO Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics and the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, a roadmap for responsible, sustainable and accessible tourism, the provision⁴ of which are addressed to all tourism stakeholders, including governments, companies and tourists alike;

Emphasizing the ethical principles of both the Code and the Convention according to which tourism movements should be free, fair, accessible, and sustainable, and should reconcile economic concerns, with the sanitary precautions of the host populations while maintaining the principles of non-discrimination;

Recommends that any COVID-19 certificate for international travel would have to meet the following conditions:

1. The certificate should be a unique document, containing information on the vaccination status, and/or diagnostic (molecular, PCR and antigen) and/or information about recovery status;
2. The certificate should be limited in duration and its use should be discontinued as soon as the World Health Organization no longer considers COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC);
3. The certificate should be used primarily for international mobility;
4. For a maximum accessibility, the certificate should be available both in digital and paper format;
5. The certificate must ensure, in both formats, data protection and security, as well as the privacy of the holder. Said certificate must also provide a guarantee of authenticity to avoid fraud and misuses;
6. The certificate should be free of charge; international cooperation and governments should ensure the population’s wide access to free vaccines and affordable tests;
7. The provision of vaccines and related certificates at destination countries should not form part of package tours or other similar products nor should such initiatives be supported by governments.

Madrid, May 2021

³ [Statement on the 7th meeting of the International Health Regulations \(2005\) Emergency Committee regarding the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

⁴ [UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism](#), articles 5, 6, 7 and 8