



International Civil Aviation Organization

WORKING PAPER

A36-WP/197

EX/70

17/9/07

English only

ASSEMBLY — 36TH SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 18: Passenger and crew health and the prevention of spread of communicable disease

WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION ACTIVITIES ON AVIAN AND HUMAN INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS

(Presented by the World Tourism Organization)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Avian and Human Influenza (AHI), since its outbreak two years ago, is still causing widespread international concern about the potential impact of a pandemic. It is crucial that all parts of society be prepared for the eventuality of a major disaster such as a pandemic - the ramifications go well beyond the health sector alone. In this respect, UNWTO has concentrated on building resilience to the impact of a pandemic in the tourism sector through various actions including strengthening communications and increasing awareness using multi-stakeholder scenarios based on simulation exercises. As Tourism and aviation are interdependent; hence the present paper urges the need for a closer cooperation between UNWTO and ICAO on matters pertaining to AHI in particular and to Risk and Crisis Management in general.

Action: The Assembly is invited to agree that there should be further strengthening of the working relationship between UNWTO and ICAO on activities of mutual interest such as on Avian and Human Influenza.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to ICAO Strategic Objective E .
<i>Financial implications:</i>	To be determined.
<i>References:</i>	A36-WP/22, EX/2

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The existing close working relationship of UNWTO with ICAO in several areas is based on two pillars. Firstly, since the World Tourism Organization is the United Nations agency responsible for tourism and as such there is a clear linkage with the air transportation industry. Secondly, because tourists themselves and tourism services providers are heavily linked as users of air transport.

1.2 This working relationship should be of special importance when it comes to Risk and Crisis Management activities of mutual interest as is the case with Avian and Human Influenza (AHI).

1.3 AVIAN AND HUMAN INFLUENZA IN CONTEXT

1.4 AHI was identified in 2006 by the UNWTO General Assembly as a threat to tourism that required immediate attention. Based on UNWTO General Assembly Resolution A/RES/498 (XVI), a working group on Risk and Crisis Management (RAMG) was established and a comprehensive action plan developed. In accordance with the action plan UNWTO carried out during the last two years numerous activities, which are elaborated on the Organization's website (www.unwto.org):

- a) adjusted UNWTO's priorities to ensure that the Secretariat can deal effectively with the current situation and have the ability to respond appropriately in the event of any change in status;
- b) established avian 'flu contacts and national coordinators within the UNWTO membership;
- c) fully integrated into the combined efforts of the United Nations led by the United Nations System Senior Coordinator for Avian and Human Influenza (UNSIC) and the UN System Consolidated Action Plan for Avian and Human Influenza;
- d) convened and managed TERN (Tourism Emergency Response Network) – a group of Industry Associations¹, to exchange information and issue as necessary common messages to travellers. In this way the capacities to respond to any pandemic and to ensure that travellers receive consistent advice were improved. The original group of eight has been progressively extended to 16 at the present count, creating a global network of networks encompassing thousands of tourism stakeholders;
- e) developed an emergency response system portal in collaboration with Microsoft that is now operational under www.sos.travel; its purpose is to serve as a "one stop" global reference point for the tourism sector and eventually for tourists themselves seeking information;

¹ African Travel and Tourism Association (ATTA); Airports Council International (ACI); American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA); American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA); Asociación Latinoamericana de Transporte Aéreo (ALTA); Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA); Association of European Airlines (AEA); International Association Transport Association (IATA); International Council of Cruise Lines (ICCL); International Federation of Tour Operators (IFTO); International Hotel and Restaurant Association (IHRA); National Tour Association (NTA); Pacific Area Travel Association (PATA); United Federation of Travel Agent's Associations (UFTAA); European Travel Commission (ETC).

- f) started a permanent data monitoring process has been started and issued a daily reference bulletin for members, the tourism industry and travellers, posted on the www.sos.travel website;
- g) circulated regular information with guidelines approved by WHO on AHI to members;
- h) maintained routine liaison with the WHO and ICAO on matters related to avian and human influenza;
- i) planned three international avian and human influenza simulation exercises for the year 2007 of which the first, covering Europe, Africa and the Middle-East, was held in Paris in March, and attended by a representative of ICAO, while the second, for the Asia Pacific region, took place in Jakarta, Indonesia, in July. The third AHI exercise, that will include the Americas, is scheduled to be held in Mexico City in October; and
- j) participated at various travel trade events, international and regional meetings where actions and progress on activities pertaining to risk and crisis management were elaborated. A presentation by ICAO during the UNWTO International Conference on Safety and Security took place in June 2007.

1.5 UNWTO's work in the field of the spread of communicable disease has been dramatically realigned over the past two years under the current threat of avian 'flu. Using the momentum of higher awareness and improved coordination mechanisms and procedures, UNWTO has extended its activities further to a broader strategic approach to Risk and Crisis Management in tourism in general to cover other risks of importance and for the benefit of the tourism sector. A detailed work programme was developed for the coming budget period of 2008-9 and new internal structures implemented, using existing and newly allocated resources, enabling the Organization to strengthen its activities in Risk and Crisis Management.

2. CONCLUSIONS

2.1 Noting these efforts and the benefit of those activities for travellers and the tourism sector in general, not forgetting the latent threat of an avian and human influenza pandemic and the sensitivity of the tourism sector to natural and man-made disasters, UNWTO believes there is an urgent need for further strengthening the cooperation between UNWTO and ICAO on Risk and Crisis Management activities.

— END —