

MAVCOM's International Webinar

“Charting a New Frontier: Aviation Consumer Protection Needs Today and Beyond”

Keynote Address by Yang Berhormat Datuk Seri Ir. Wee Ka Siong

Minister of Transport Malaysia

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Yang Berhormat Dato Henry Sum Agong

Deputy Minister of Transport Malaysia,

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YBhg. Datuk Seri Hj. Saripuddin Hj. Kasim

Executive Chairman of the Malaysian Aviation Commission (MAVCOM),

Commissioners and Committee Members of MAVCOM,

Esteemed delegates, moderators, and panel speakers,

Members of the media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

[Introduction]

1. Selamat datang, a very warm welcome to everyone.
2. I sincerely apologise for not being able to attend this webinar today due to an urgent engagement overseas. However, I am glad to have both Dato Henry and Datuk Isham representing the Ministry of Transport for this important occasion.

3. I am pleased to present my keynote today for this international aviation webinar organised by MAVCOM, a first of its kind for Malaysia. It is delightful and encouraging to see participation from so many countries here today.
4. I must add a special thank you to all our accomplished and renowned moderators and panel speakers.
5. I highly commend and congratulate MAVCOM for spearheading this initiative, which is an important milestone for the Malaysian aviation sector.
6. MAVCOM was first established in 2016 to regulate economic and commercial matters relating to Malaysia's civil aviation industry, with the aim of promoting a commercially viable, consumer-oriented, and resilient aviation industry. Part of their mandate is to encourage a healthy competition in the civil aviation industry and to provide a mechanism for the protection of consumers.
7. Therefore, this webinar is an integral initiative for Malaysia in our aim to strengthen aviation consumer protection as well as to further educate and empower consumers on their rights.
8. This is in tandem with our pledge to actively support ICAO's mission to enable a global air transport network in building resilience and sustainability of the sector.
9. Before I continue, please allow me to also take this opportunity to particularly thank Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano, Council President of the ICAO who made the time to share a few welcoming words with all of us. Thank you, Mr. Sciacchitano and to ICAO.

[The Big Picture]

Ladies and gentlemen,

10. Indeed, the pandemic has had a tremendous and unprecedented impact on aviation with millions of people greatly affected by travel restrictions. The entire ordeal has reaffirmed the critical importance of air travel and the development of Malaysia.

11. Airlines and airports also had to quickly adapt to the introduction of new regulations and pivot their business and operational strategies during the pandemic.
12. Malaysia's annual passenger traffic declined sharply from 109.2 million in 2019 to 26.7 million in 2020, which dropped further to 11.0 million in 2021.
13. During the height of the pandemic, airlines recorded an unprecedented drop in seat capacity of -92.3 per cent Year-on-Year in May 2020, the largest ever decline in the Malaysian aviation industry.
14. According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), global air passenger traffic in 2021 was only at 47 per cent of the 2019 levels, with the recovery of international travel dampened by the emergence of the Delta and Omicron variants of the COVID-19 virus.
15. Moving forward, there have been strong indications of a robust recovery in air passenger traffic globally, as borders have reopened, and travel restrictions have eased.
16. In our revival, Malaysia forecasts air passenger traffic numbers in 2022 to be between 32.6 million and 49 million. This is a 30 to 45 per cent recovery from the pre-pandemic air passenger traffic levels in 2019.
17. To prepare for the future, we must reflect on the lessons learned from the pandemic and improve further. Specifically, it is critical that consumer rights be enhanced to safeguard consumer well-being to make sure the people's interests are always protected.
18. However, such a pursuit amid the challenges brought on by the pandemic, requires extensive collaborations and engagement to bring forward the aviation industry both locally and globally.

19. Therefore, MAVCOM's webinar today to bring together various thought leaders from across the globe is a necessary and timely pursuit to facilitate the sharing of experience, valuable insights, and key learnings.

[MAVCOM's Initiatives for Consumers]

Ladies and gentlemen,

20. Over the years, MAVCOM has continuously delivered on its responsibilities by championing strategic initiatives for the benefit of consumers.

21. For example, the Commission introduced **the Malaysian Aviation Consumer Protection Code (MACPC)** in 2016. In 2019, the **MACPC was further enhanced** to better safeguard travellers' welfare and to improve the service levels of the industry.

22. I am pleased to announce that MAVCOM is in the midst of **enhancing the MACPC** based on what we learnt from the pandemic to better protect consumers.

23. The Commission also developed an **Airports Quality of Service ("QoS") Framework** to improve passenger comfort and service levels at Malaysia's airports.

24. In order to educate consumers about their air travel rights in a more accessible manner, MAVCOM launched **FlySmart** and the **FlySmart mobile app**. Last year, MAVCOM established a **Travel Advisory Guide** in the app, providing consumers with up-to-date information on air travel rules and restrictions.

[Webinar – Brief Introduction and Key Discussion Points]

Ladies and gentlemen,

25. COVID-19 has posed unique challenges for both air service providers and consumers alike. We must rethink aviation consumer protection and devise new and innovative solutions for air travel.

26. Therefore, I urge that the webinar must generate valuable sharing of experiences between countries as well as conversations that may create ideas to guide future regulations and improve customer value propositions.
27. We need to hear more exchanges between government authorities and regulators in **ensuring a greater balance** between the protection of consumers and industry competitiveness, and how best to achieve this, considering different economic, commercial, and social factors.
28. On the part of industry players and policymakers, it is important that **constant revisions and updates are made to legislation** and other specific regulations governing consumer rights while maintaining competitiveness within the industry.
29. I hope that the sessions today will also share ideas on **restoring consumers' trust and confidence** in air travel while meeting strict pre-requisites set by health and government authorities globally. At the same time, **air travel passengers must also be empowered** to protect their rights as consumers.
30. **Ongoing consumer education** is key to this goal. This webinar must contribute to a better understanding of consumer rights among consumers as well as industry leaders, government representatives, regulators, non-governmental organisations, and consumer associations.

[Conclusion]

Ladies and gentlemen,

31. The road to recovery is a long and winding one but aviation is on the path of recovery. All of us can play a role in bettering air travel for consumers in the recovery. By implementing appropriate strategies, good industry practices, and proactive actions, we will overcome the pandemic's impacts together. It is my hope that the webinar today will be helpful as a guide and inspiration for your respective countries' policy-making and legislative works

32. On this note, I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank MAVCOM and its team for sparing no effort in organising this international webinar and bringing together the best and brightest minds in the industry together.

33. It gives me great pleasure now to officiate MAVCOM's inaugural international aviation webinar, "Charting a New Frontier: Aviation Consumer Protection Needs Today and Beyond."

Thank you.