

Dubai Tourism and stakeholders discuss post-pandemic steps and strategies to support industry revival

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Participants appreciative of policy decisions made by the government to ensure phased reopening of tourism and other sectors

International hospitality partners emphasise Dubai's safety as a travel destination that adheres to best practices and high standards of hygiene. Postponement of Expo 2020 will provide all participating nations more time to normalise post-COVID-19 and ensure more robust and inclusive global attendance.

Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism) held a virtual meeting with key aviation and hospitality partners to discuss current and post-pandemic strategies and joint initiatives aimed at ensuring the tourism industry's gradual return to normalcy. The meeting also discussed global efforts to minimise the transmission of COVID-19 and precautionary measures deployed to safeguard the health of communities across the UAE.

Presided by the Director General of Dubai Tourism, the meeting was attended by key executives of hospitality groups including Jumeirah, Emaar Hospitality Group, Marriott International, Millennium, Accor, JA Resorts and Hotels, Kerzner International, Al Habtoor Group, Wasl and Rotana, in addition to aviation sector players like Emirates, flydubai and Dubai International Airport.

The partners were briefed on the phased approach being adopted to reopen the tourism sector in Dubai, and the marketing communications and activities in progress across key markets to reinforce Dubai's high global profile including the ongoing **#Till We Meet Again** digital activation. With the hospitality sector being a key pillar of Dubai's economy, the discussions between Dubai Tourism and partners focused on the steps being taken to pave the way for the reopening of hotels and other tourism facilities across the city, while ensuring adherence to the strictest guidelines and providing opportunities to revive domestic market demand.

As part of overall efforts to create a positive perception and a conducive environment aimed at instilling confidence among travellers who plan to visit Dubai, the meeting also looked at various precautionary measures that have been implemented, both at a citywide level and across specific sectors including tourism, which represent critical touchpoints for visitors and residents during their stay. One of the key priorities from a marketing perspective is to emphasise the safety and security that Dubai provides, and the

clear stringent health and safety protocols issued by the Dubai Health Authority based on international standards and best practices aimed at containing the contagion. The meeting also discussed the mechanism to ensure adherence to the guidelines, practical solutions to scan and monitor passengers at Dubai International Airport and the effective management of contact tracing in compliance with privacy standards, following the resumption of air travel.

All participants at the meeting expressed their appreciation for the way in which government – both at the Dubai and UAE level – have dealt with the threat of COVID-19 including the rational policy decisions that have allowed robust management of the health crisis and mitigation of the economic repercussions by allowing for the gradual reopening of vital sectors like tourism.

Industry executives at the meeting also agreed that the postponement of Expo 2020 was prudent and well-received. It provides the opportunity to hold the event in a more normalised global environment where all countries can actively participate, making it a more representative Expo for the world in 2021. The businesses also reiterated their support to Dubai Tourism to kick-start the sector with collaborative development of promotional programmes and strong customised packages that take into account the current realities of the global market. The stakeholders were unanimous that there was positive sentiment surrounding Dubai as a key destination in the international circuit thanks to the city's world class health infrastructure, and protocols and processes deployed during the management of this pandemic.

His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General, Dubai Tourism, commented: "Our regular meetings with stakeholders reflect the longstanding collaboration between Dubai Tourism and its partners, and this latest industry engagement has even greater significance since it allowed us to discuss recent developments and explore ways of restoring tourism confidence and accelerating growth. It must be emphasised that the health and safety of our residents and guests will always remain our top priority as we continue to work with the industry and our government partners not just during this critical period but beyond, to develop innovative approaches, real-time responses, and proactive yet prudent initiatives to ensure that Dubai remains at the forefront of the world's leading destinations in line with our strategy.

"The remarkable vision and leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai, have always been an inspiration to us all, and in the past months, we have been particularly empowered and heartened by the decisiveness, measured considerations, and efficient management that have been demonstrated across the city. Dubai's Supreme Committee of Crisis and Disaster Management and the Dubai Health Authority have been particularly impressive in the delivery and maintenance of the highest standards of health and safety for communities across the city and we are deeply appreciative of their continued efforts on this front."

"As we look ahead to a gradual reopening of tourism, we will focus on the key elements that have ensured the industry's success over the past decade – creating unique value and delivering an uncompromised guest experience. To achieve this, we rely on the solidarity of our stakeholders who have always played a pivotal role. We hope they will continue to lead from the front in positioning Dubai as a must-visit destination. Indeed, it is imperative in these unexpected times to harness our collective strengths and design effective solutions that ensure Dubai's prominence on the global tourism industry stage. Together we can redefine the future of travel," **HE Almarri** added.

Paul Griffiths, CEO of Dubai Airports, said: "Dubai International Airport is prepared to welcome visitors as soon as airports around the world start reopening and pave the way for a phased resumption of air services. As health and hygiene standards will play an influential role in encouraging people to travel, we have put in place a set of health and safety protocols at our airports including all necessary quarantine arrangements and the implementation of sanitisation and disinfection measures to reassure tourists that Dubai is one of the safest destinations to visit. We will also continue to receive incoming flights from select destinations, operate cargo flights, as well as flights to repatriate expatriates and guests to their home destinations."

Adnan Kazim, Chief Commercial Officer at Emirates Airline, said: "Emirates commences passenger flights between Dubai and nine destinations from 21 May - London Heathrow, Frankfurt, Paris, Milan, Madrid, Chicago, Toronto, Sydney and Melbourne, and we will also offer connections in Dubai for customers travelling between the UK and Australia. We continue to operate flights to other destinations in collaboration with embassies and consulates to repatriate visitors from different nationalities to their respective countries. The health and safety of our customers and employees remain our top priorities across our operations, and Emirates has implemented comprehensive measures at every step of the customer journey. This includes thermal temperature scanning before check-in, the mandatory use of masks and gloves for everyone at the airport, protective suits for our crew and ground employees, physical distancing protocols, modified services to reduce contact, enhanced cleaning of all our touch points, and much more. Working closely with all stakeholders in Dubai, including the aviation and health authorities, Emirates aims to offer our customers peace of mind and confidence to plan their travel with us, book with us, and fly with us."

Ghaith Al Ghaith, CEO of flydubai, said: “As a national carrier, flydubai has been mindful of its responsibilities during these unprecedented times. With the support of our regulator, we have operated 379 all-cargo flights to enable the movement of essential goods. We have carried more than 2,250,000 kgs of cargo to the UAE as well across our network and beyond. Moreover, we are fully supporting governments and authorities with their repatriation efforts. Since the flight restrictions came into effect, we have operated more than 100 repatriation flights to 19 different countries enabling 14,000 citizens to return home. flydubai will continue to work closely with its strategic partners to ensure that all safety measures are in place in line with international standards when flight restrictions are lifted.”

Mohammed Al Habtoor, Vice Chairman and CEO, Al Habtoor Group, said: “Dubai with its wide experience in successfully dealing with challenging situations is capable of restoring tourism momentum and paving the way for the hospitality sector to return to its previous state. This is also a view shared by our international hospitality partners who have placed great faith in Dubai’s resilience during tough times, as well as in its world-class healthcare system and the range of preventive measures taken across the city such as the effective and regular sanitisation and sterilisation programmes, that will help highlight Dubai as one of the world’s safest destinations.”

Mark Willis, CEO Middle East and Africa at Accor, praised the government’s efforts in reopening the markets and supporting the tourism sector: “Accor is committed to coordinating with Dubai Tourism and all related entities, from both government and private sectors, to ensure we are aligned in making the safety and well-being of our guests and team members our key priority”

Neal Jones, Chief Sales & Marketing Officer, Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA), Marriott International, said: “In spite of the current situation caused by the global pandemic, Marriott International wishes to emphasise the promising future that awaits the tourism sector in Dubai, and this is largely due to the emirate’s visionary leadership and the excellent understanding and collaboration between Dubai Tourism and all its stakeholders in working towards the common goal of positioning Dubai as a leading destination. As an international chain that enjoys a longstanding relationship with Dubai, Marriott is committed to supporting the industry’s efforts to regain momentum by rolling out our own initiatives and packages to attract visitors to Dubai when the time is safe for travel.”