

April 27, 2020

Dr. Pang Yiu-kai, GBS. JP
Chairman, Hong Kong Tourism Board
11/F, Citicorp
18, Whitfield Road
North Point
Email: yk.pang@hktb.com

Dear Dr. Pang,

As the current spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to develop, the tourism and travel industry is monitoring the situation closely.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared the outbreak of COVID-19 to be a Global Pandemic and issued a set of Temporary Recommendations. These currently include extensive travel restrictions.

The effects of the outbreak are already being felt throughout the global economy. Economic activity has dropped, and all evidence points towards a significant downturn in areas affected by the virus. The tourism and travel industry, as one of the sectors heavily reliant on the movement of people, has been particularly adversely hit.

Tourism's contribution to Hong Kong employment and GDP is crucial. Sectors of Hospitality, Tourism, Food and Beverage are closely tied with the attractions industry. IAAPA attractions as well as manufacturers and suppliers members of our Hong Kong region currently include: Ocean Park Corporation, Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, Ngong Ping 360 Limited, SuperPark Asia Limited, Epicland, Monopoly Dreams, Cityline (HongKong) Limited, Pico Global Services Limited and Ptarmigan Integration Ltd.

The tourism and travel industry requires substantial investment by all actors concerned. At the same time, as the current health emergency has demonstrated, it is also an industry that is very vulnerable to health emergencies. This means that the sector has already suffered and will continue to suffer serious repercussions, as the COVID-19 situation develops.

We are aware that some discussions on supportive economic measures to help the sector cope with the serious downturn are already ongoing and welcome the announcement by Hong Kong government officials of a fast injection of assistance to health care systems, small businesses and hard-hit sectors. We would like to address this open letter to Hong Kong Government and Tourism Board and ask for a series of additional supportive measures:



- Politicians need to maintain open communication channels and engage in exchange of information, particularly with the most affected sectors.
- We urge financial institutions to start an open discussion with the tourism industry to agree on a sustainable way forward, ensuring the continuous operation of tourism businesses, while safeguarding the viability of financial institutions.
- We call on policy makers to consider all possible financial and economic measures to support economic recovery after the downturn caused by the COVID-19.
- The industry would strongly welcome fast access to short- and medium-term loans to overcome liquidity shortages, as well as fiscal relief.
- We believe that financial support in form of an immediate aid package to employees on temporary leave or reduced working time, to avoid lay-offs is urgently necessary.

In this developing and challenging situation, tourism industry stakeholders stand in solidarity with international efforts to stem the spread of COVID-19 and effectively treat affected patients.

While the global community is focussed on curtailing the spread of COVID-19, policy makers must also plan for the economic recovery after the outbreak is eventually put under control. The tourism and travel industry is particularly effective at creating new jobs in a recovery, especially for micro-enterprises and SMEs. It is thus necessary to support the sector, so it can assist in the subsequent economic recovery.

Hong Kong's prospects as a travel destination remain very strong. Once the health emergency passes, demand for tourism services will return quickly and we need to ensure that we remain in a position to deliver.

Signed on behalf of IAAPA Asia Pacific,



June Ko

Executive Director and Vice-President

IAAPA APAC

