To: Editors & Health Journalists
Issued by: Department of Health
Date: 10 December, 2020

MEDIA STATEMENT

Department of Health to launch pilot programme for a new web-based Travel Health Questionnaire COVID-19 screening platform

With the full resumption of international travel, the national Department of Health has increased efforts to strengthen active screening and surveillance at ports of entry in South Africa. The department is launching a pilot project for the *COVID SA travel system*, which is a digital screening solution, that allows travellers to complete the required travel health questionnaire (THQ) on their personal devices ahead of their arrival at the ports of entry.

The Department is intending to make a move from paper-based screening systems to a digitized screening solution in a phased approach. The web-based THQ platform will complement and strengthen the existing method of screening and surveillance at ports of entry, as a user-friendly tool allowing travellers to complete the travel health questionnaire on their personal devices prior to their travel.

The web-based travel screening solution will allow travellers to complete their travel and symptomatic information at any time from 2 days ahead of their journey to ensure that the exposure and symptoms information provided is relevant. Once completed, the traveller will receive a unique number (look-up ID) which they will present to the Port Health official at the respective port of entry to proceed with the screening process. Over time, as more travellers use this system it can save them time and help fast-track screening at ports of entry.

The department will introduce through a pilot, a digitized screening system for international travellers arriving and departing from South Africa. As of the 17th of December 2020, international travellers arriving at O.R Tambo International Airport, those departing from Cape Town International Airport, those entering the country through Beit Bridge land border and those exiting through Maseru Bridge land border will be expected to complete the web-based THQ. The paper-based system for COVID-19 screening will continue to be in operation at all other operational ports of entry.

This system will play a critical role in assisting Port Health with managing travellers, identifying potential high-risk travellers and to respond effectively.

Security of personal information was one of the top priorities throughout the development of this system. Accordingly, best practice guidelines as per the POPI Act are followed to protect all traveller's personal information at all times.

The COVID SA travel system provides us with additional armour to better manage and survey travellers to prevent importation and exporting of the virus. The system will also provide better data collection and storage which can be helpful with identifying potential high-risk travellers. An algorithm that helps determine the risk profile of travellers is embedded in the system. In the event of a positive case, the system will assist with identifying potentially exposed

travellers who were in proximity to the positive case, further assisting with better contact tracing.

The *COVID SA travel system* will be live from noon on 15 December 2020 to allow travellers to complete the web-based form ahead of their travel and can be accessed using this link: https://sa-covid-19-travel.info/. Travellers who have already booked their tickets can still access the web-based THQ at any time after the system goes live.

Travellers will still be subjected to the screening protocols in ports of entry, including temperature screening and are still required to present a negative COVID-19 PCR test result obtained not more than 72 hours from time of departure.

Travellers arriving into South Africa are required to download the COVID Alert SA application on their mobile phones.

For more information, please contact

Popo Maja, Departmental Spokesperson
072 585 3219
Popo.maja@health.gov.za

…END…