FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ISSUES NEW COVID 19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDELINE FOR DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL TRAVELS: PCR TESTS, FACE MASKS AND OTHERS NO LONGER REQUIRED

Introduction

Sequel to our last update in **March 2022**, in which we addressed the **Presidential Steering Committee on COVID-19 (PSC)** review of the travel protocol guideline, which eliminated the need for pre-departure PCR COVID-19 testing for fully vaccinated travelers arriving in Nigeria and introduction of the use of vaccination cards.

More recently, the PSC revised the COVID-19/Public Health guidelines on Safety Measures and Travel Advisory in response to the current reality that the COVID-19 pandemic prevalence in Nigeria and most other parts of the world has remained low for a sustained period and on **December 12, 2022**, the **Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA)** notified aviation service providers ("all operators") of the Federal Government's revised COVID-19 (PSC) protocol guidelines, imposing sanctions to ensure all operators comply with these new requirements for domestic and international travel operations.

Need-to-know Information!

The revised guidelines which are now in full effect introduced the following key changes:

A. Mask Mandate:

i) Airport workers, passengers, and crew members are no longer required to wear facemasks inside airport buildings and onboard aircraft.

ii) Persons over the age of 60 who are immunocompromised (e.g., due to organ transplant, cancer, etc.) and those with co-morbidities (e.g., Heart disease, Diabetes Mellitus, Hypertension, etc.) are advised to wear facemasks, wash their hands with soap and water, use hand alcohol-based sanitizers, and avoid large crowds.

iii) Disinfection of bags at terminal building entrances is no longer required.

iv) Airlines are required to resume serving catering (meals and beverages) on board aircraft.

v) Maintaining social distance within airport terminal buildings is no longer mandatory.

vi) COVID-19 PCR tests: All passengers, regardless of vaccination status, are no longer required to undergo pre-departure and post-arrival COVID-19 PCR tests.

vii) HEALTH DECLARATION FORM: Permission to travel/ QR code is no longer required. In its place, all passengers traveling to Nigeria must complete a simplified Health questionnaire form (non-COVID-19 specific) on the Nigerian International Travel Portal (NITP) prior to departure, prior to landing, or at the Airport terminal building upon arrival.

viii) All other COVID-19 quarantine/travel requirements are no longer required.

Conclusion

This is a welcome development considering that the prevalence of the COVID 19 pandemic has truly decreased drastically and has been so reduced for a long time all over the world, this will ensure for an ease of entry and exit within the country.

However, passengers should note that, while the Permission to Travel/ QR code is no longer required, the Federal Government has introduced a health declaration form, which can also be accessed on the Nigerian International Travel Portal (NITP), to be completed by passengers preferably before departure. This form is not Covid 19 specific and will most likely include some other basic health information.

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