

H.E. Mr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director General
World Health Organization (WHO)
20, Avenue Appia
1211-Geneva 27
Switzerland



By email

AD/GE1048998/UDP

Geneva, 12 May 2021

IRU emergency call for action on Covid-19 vaccinations for professional drivers

Your Excellency,

As the world watches, Covid-19 continues to cause devastation, affecting each and every one of us living through these difficult times. Our thoughts go out to those who are working hard on the front line, day in, day out, to fight the spread and impact of the pandemic. The leadership that you and your team are showing in this global battle is fundamental for all of us who are working on the ground to fight the virus.

IRU, the world road transport organisation, represents the voice of 3.5 million transport operating companies across the globe. Road transport is an essential industry, and our drivers are essential workers. Ultimately, it is crucial to keep transport links open wherever and as long as possible to allow people, essential goods and medical supplies such as Covid-19 vaccines to get to where they need to be, and to protect transport workers and companies who are the economic backbone of our societies.

In this respect, I took note of the joint statement by WHO, ICAO, ILO, IMO and IOM on the prioritisation of Covid-19 vaccinations for seafarers and aircrew, published on 25 March 2021, and fully support your call for the development of an international, harmonised framework for vaccination certificates. I am, however, surprised that only seafarers and aircrew have been addressed, and the mode that is part of and interlinks all transport and mobility chains, the road transport industry and their essential, professional drivers, has not been included.

Along similar lines, at IRU's recent General Assembly, our members unanimously adopted an emergency call for action on Covid-19 vaccinations for professional drivers, which you will find enclosed.

To allow road transport to drive us out of the pandemic and build back better, we call on you and your team to:

- Urgently develop a digital vaccination certificate, and encourage WHO Member States to mutually recognise this certificate and the certified vaccinations that are begin administered; and

- Urge WHO Member States to prioritise commercial drivers in their national vaccination programmes.

I count on you in your role as global coordinator, listening to the voices of all those fighting on the front line to keep the economies of the world open and societies connected, to bring the concerns of the road transport industry to the attention of all WHO Member States.

IRU and its members around the globe stand ready to work with you to drive the recovery.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'U. de Pretto'.

Umberto de Pretto
Secretary General

Enc.