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## CAMBODIA TIGHTENS CONDITIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS

On 20 May 2020, Cambodia's State Secretariat of Civil Aviation issued new rules for international travelers arriving in Cambodia. The new regulation addresses the problem of Cambodian and overseas nationals coming (back) to the country during the pandemic. A Cambodian national who returned from the Philippines that very same day was discovered to have COVID-19. Phnom Penh's Pochentong International Airport still receives a trickle of international flights, mostly from China and Korea.

### What is new from 20 May 2020?

- From 20 May onwards, both foreigners and Cambodian nationals need a certificate stating that they are negative for COVID-19 before being able to travel to Cambodia. Previously, this applied only to foreigners.
- The absolute ban on travelers from certain countries with a high incidence of COVID-19 (Iran, Italy, Germany, Spain, France, and the USA) has been dropped. Now all foreigners, all originations are treated the same.
- Everyone arriving by airplane will be tested again upon arrival. All arrivals must wait for the results, which can take, according to what we have seen in other countries, from a few hours to up to several days, depending on the COVID-19 test used. It is unclear how long the waiting period will be in Cambodia.

### Highlights of this note

- ▶ What is new from 20 May 2020?
- ▶ Not designed to help international tourism
- ▶ Is the test in a traveler's home country useful?
- ▶ The Kingdom needs tourism

- If one or more persons test positive for COVID-19, the whole group of travelers (for example, all passengers on the same flight) will be isolated for 14 days at a government facility (not at home or a hotel of the traveler's choosing).
- Even if no one tests positive, all travelers are required to self-isolate in their home (or hotel), and this will be monitored.

### Not designed to help international tourism

With over 6 million tourists visiting Cambodia in 2019, to stay at the iconic Angkor Wat temple complex in Siem Reap for example, tourism accounts for 12% of the country's GDP. This regulation does not seem to have been designed to slowly start up a dearly-needed tourism influx. Even if a whole



Photo: Agencies

group of travelers tests negative, every arrival must self-isolate. Obviously, tourists and business travelers do not travel to Cambodia to self-isolate.

More importantly, very few tourists or business travelers will want to run the risk of having one positive person in the group, triggering the requirement to spend two weeks in a state facility. Another risk is that of a false-positive test among the group. The clinical sensitivity of RT-PCR tests ranges from 66 to 80 percent. That means that when 50 people arrive on an airplane, there very well could be one person testing positive for COVID-19 in such a group, despite actually being negative (as the test in their home country before being allowed to board the plane showed).

### Is the test in a traveler's home country useful?

Since everyone is tested on arrival, we wonder about the use of testing them before leaving their country of origin as well. Tests are very hard to obtain in some countries, and Cambodia does not seem to attach much consequence to them. The negative test in their home country does not seem to do travelers much good, because they would still have to go into government quarantine if someone else tests positive upon arrival. If on the other hand, no one in the group tests positive, there is not

much point in having two negative tests as the traveler goes into much more comfortable home isolation in Cambodia.

The truth is that tests before departure do increase the likelihood significantly that no one will test positive after arrival either. It will also reassure travelers that they are on an airplane with all tested persons.

### The Kingdom needs tourism

Unfortunately, for now, many business visitors and expatriate employees will have to wait for other less stringent regulations before deciding to make the journey back to Cambodia.

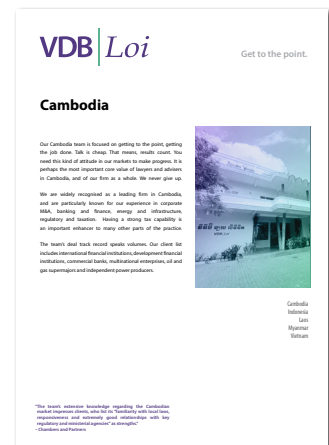
But Cambodia needs tourism. Some highly visited European countries, such as Spain and Greece, have already made the political decision to open their borders to tourists this summer. Others, such as the UK, have essentially closed all tourism by imposing a two-week quarantine period on everyone entering. Even the possibility of such a quarantine, as Cambodia has now, is enough to scare away all tourists, that is fairly certain.

[Here is the link to the relevant regulation.](#)

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