

**COVID-19 – Communiqué issued by M. Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, and M. Jean-Baptiste Djebbari, Minister of State for Transport, attached to the Minister for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition**

Paris, 23 March 2020

---

On 17 March, in the context of the coronavirus crisis – a crisis unprecedented in its seriousness –, France took some very strong measures at the French President's request, all with the same, single goal: to reduce contacts and journeys drastically and by every means, because this is the measure most effective in preventing as much as possible the spread of the virus. In an effort to be consistent and effective, we are implementing this measure nationwide but also in Europe and internationally.

We have asked all French people whose normal residence is outside Europe to avoid all international travel and stay at home. This advice is still valid and necessary today.

By contrast, we have asked those French people currently temporarily on visits abroad to return swiftly to France, as long as air links are operating. To this end, we have taken several supportive measures to help and facilitate our compatriots' efforts. For example, thanks to an exceptional mechanism created on our initiative by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs' Crisis and Support Unit in liaison with the relevant staff at the office of the Minister of State for Transport and the authorities in the countries concerned, we have embarked on operational cooperation with the Air France group and its airlines Air France and Transavia; we pay tribute to the commitment and cooperation shown by them and other French and foreign airlines. This cooperation has enabled us firstly to identify our compatriots' needs country by country and then to implement a transport plan tailored to local priorities and emergencies.

This transport plan is now fully operational and bearing fruit. In recent days it has allowed more than 60,000 of our compatriots to return to France.

For example, more than 140 flights organized in Morocco in the past week have allowed over 20,000 French people to return to France. In Tunisia and Algeria, more than 10,000 of our compatriots have been able to return home to France. Special commercial flights have also been organized in Portugal and Spain in the past few days, enabling several hundred people to return home.

Similar measures, using normal and special commercial flights, have been put in place in several dozen countries – in Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and Africa – where our compatriots are staying temporarily. For instance, only yesterday evening we brought back nearly 300 compatriots from Peru. Tomorrow we should be able to return 400 French people from the Philippines. Solutions are also being implemented in India and the Dominican Republic, where we have many compatriots. And these measures also apply, of course, in all countries where there are French people.

The situations are often very complicated and require extremely active efforts, including on the political front. As such, we are speaking to our counterparts in the countries concerned and will continue to do so whenever necessary. We are also making sure that plane ticket

prices are regulated by asking airline companies, in the exceptional circumstances we are experiencing, to make an effort, and many of them have agreed to this.

There is still a great deal to do. We are aware of the difficult, sometimes even harrowing situation in which thousands of French nationals still find themselves, waiting for a solution to be found for them to return to France. This is why we, the French embassies and consulates general throughout our diplomatic network, along with local Air France agencies, are and will remain fully mobilized to resolve these problems, working in conjunction with the local authorities, and propose solutions to all French travellers still abroad so they can return home./.