

HKSAR Government assists Hong Kong residents in Morocco

As a measure against COVID-19, the Moroccan authorities have announced temporary suspension of air traffic, which has left some Hong Kong residents stranded in the country. In response to media enquiries, a Government spokesman today (March 20) said that relevant bureaux / departments are rendering assistance to affected Hong Kong residents to facilitate their return to Hong Kong through different channels.

On March 15, the Moroccan authorities announced the complete suspension of international flights to and from Morocco. The Security Bureau and Immigration Department have all along been in contact with the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the HKSAR (OCMFA), the Chinese Embassy in the Kingdom of Morocco, and the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in China, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong and relevant travel agencies to understand the situation and take follow up actions.

As at today, the Immigration Department, through the 1868 hotline, and the referrals from the Chinese Embassy in the Kingdom of Morocco and Legislative Council members, received assistance requests from 147 Hong Kong residents concerning the home passage to Hong Kong. Among them 70 are from group tours, and more than 70 are individual travellers. The Immigration Department immediately rendered proper advice and assistance to these Hong Kong residents in accordance with their and their families' wishes. With the coordination between the Government and the commercial airlines, 72 of them have already booked their flights home. They have either already boarded on different flights, or have secured return arrangements.

In order to assist the Hong Kong residents to return to Hong Kong, the Government has been taking actions on multiple fronts. Among others, through the Office of the Government of the HKSAR of the People's Republic of China in Beijing (Beijing Office) and the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in China, the Government sought information from the Moroccan authorities about the operation of commercial flights in Morocco. Besides, the Civil Aviation Department has been actively liaising with the airlines which still operated at the airport of Casablanca, with a view to securing flight booking for Hong Kong residents to fly out of Morocco to the destinations via which they can transit back to Hong Kong.

The Government will continue to closely monitor COVID-19 related measures implemented by the Moroccan authorities and their impact on the Hong Kong residents in the country. The Security Bureau and the Immigration Department will stay in close contact with OCMFA, the respective embassies in both places, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong, relevant travel agencies as well as the affected Hong Kong residents and their families in order to render assistance and keep in view the developments.

Hong Kong residents travelling outside Hong Kong who need assistance may call the 24-hour hotline of the Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit of the Immigration Department at (852) 1868.