

The head of the world's biggest airline trade body has criticized travel restrictions against travelers from China in a statement published on Wednesday, arguing that such measures had proven to be ineffective in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

"It is extremely disappointing to see this knee-jerk reinstatement of measures that have proven ineffective over the last three years," said IATA director general Willie Walsh in a statement.

"Several countries are introducing COVID-19 testing and other measures for travelers from China, even though the virus is already circulating widely within their borders.

Research undertaken around the arrival of the Omicron variant concluded that putting barriers in the way of travel made no difference to the peak spread of infections. At most, restrictions delayed that peak by a few days. If a new variant emerges in any part of the world, the same situation would be expected.

That's why governments should listen to the advice of experts, including the WHO, that advice against travel restrictions. We have the tools to manage COVID-19 without resorting to ineffective measures that cut off international connectivity, damage economies and destroy jobs. Governments must base their decisions on 'science facts' rather than 'science politics'.

While China has significantly eased border measures, I have urged the Chinese government to remove the need for pre-departure COVID-19 testing for those traveling to China."

More countries across the globe have tightened covid rules for Chinese travelers. France and Britain on Friday became the latest in a growing list of countries requiring COVID-19 tests from travelers arriving from China following a surge of infections in the Asian nation.

Britain said Friday that Chinese travelers would need to show a negative COVID-19 test taken within two days of departure. The measures will take effect January 5.

Morocco imposed an entry ban on travelers from China beginning Jan. 3 because of raising the Foreign Ministry said Saturday.

"The Moroccan Authorities decided to prohibit access to the territory of the Kingdom of Morocco to all travelers, regardless of their nationality, coming from the People's

Republic of China,” it said in a statement.

The decision was taken to avoid a new wave of contaminations in the country, it said.

People in China are rushing to see their loved ones abroad, now that travel restrictions have been lifted. But experts have warned of potential new COVID variants spreading worldwide.

China has announced plans to drop the government’s strict COVID-19 restrictions for travel in and out of the country. From January 8, people traveling into the country will no longer have to quarantine.