

16<sup>th</sup> September 2020 - An open letter has been sent to Cape Verde Ministers from the new 'Association of Small and Medium sized enterprises' on Sal Island, about the need to re-open borders .....

OPEN LETTER (Google Translators)

REOPENING BORDERS 🙌

Hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Ulisses Correia Silva

Hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Dr. Olavo Correia

Hon. Minister of Tourism and Transport, Dr. Carlos Jorge Santos

Hon. Minister of Health and Social Security, Dr. Arlindo Nascimento do Rosário

Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Luís Filipe Tavares

Representing many business realities present in the islands of Sal and Boavista, we would like to express our solidarity and understanding to all members of the Government. The advent of a global pandemic last spring undoubtedly created many management problems in an unprepared infrastructure context and in a very different socioeconomic environment between the islands of the archipelago. Therefore, we understand the initial difficulties in making unusual and often difficult decisions, based on contradictory information and dramatic data from other countries in the world.

We also understand that often the information disclosed by the press can sometimes be disclosed in a non-complete way. For this reason, we believe it is opportune to intensify the dialogue, directly and clearly, between the Government and the business world.

The recent decision to extend the state of calamity until October 31 implies that all activities directly or indirectly linked to the tourism and transport sector on the islands of Sal and Boavista will not see an improvement in the current dramatic situation.

On the contrary, this extension takes away all short-term hope. We are aware of the various measures that the Government is taking, many of which are well regarded by the entrepreneurs of our islands, but we wanted to express our disorientation by enumerating some steps that have taken place in recent weeks and then ask on what basis we, entrepreneurs, can plan our future and that of our employees.

Open beaches, closed beaches, some open beaches, others closed, but those open only at times, then with longer hours, but still others closed. Is the mask mandatory on public roads? The President of the Republic says yes, but in the last B.O. it is said to be a civic duty, but then Parliament will have to deliberate, so we don't know it yet and we are left with the doubt. Through the Chamber of Tourism we are informed that we will have to attend a course given by a foreign company, the Preverisk Consulting Group, to understand the new Covid-19 protocols to be implemented in our business, obtaining a quality certificate. We participated in the courses, answered the online questionnaire and awaited the certificate. Meanwhile, at the B.O. published on August 27, the Government informs that only IGAE, after due inspection, can issue the certificate. Then we send the self-declaration to IGAE and wait. Until when? This obliges CMS and CMBV to inform citizens that, although with some limitations, we can resume our activities according to our license, but only if we have the certificate issued by IGAE. We don't know how the IGAE can issue certificates to everyone in a few days, but if we had to respect what was published in the B.O. and the consequent municipal ordinance we should have closed on August 28th. What do we have to do? On 30 August, on a visit to Boavista, the PM

admits the extent of the calamity on the islands of Sal and Boavista, but the next day corrects what was published in the newspapers saying it will not be extended. In the following two days, however, the calamity was confirmed until October 31, also including the island of Fogo. How can we schedule our activities if official communications are so different? On 12 August the Minister of Tourism and Transport informs the press that there are good prospects for resuming flights as early as August, but on 17 August the Director of the Department of Disease Prevention and Control declares that "at this moment, the real situation of the spread of the virus in Cape Verde ". Meanwhile, investments and work to significantly improve health infrastructure continue: virology, intensive care, equipment, covid-19 centers, definition of health protocols, "Safe Tourism" seal.

Well, are we now ready to open according to the prospects? Yes, no, but it depends on the issuing countries. Without their "approval", can't Cape Verde open its borders? In the meantime, the months pass and the alternatives that lie ahead are basically two: - borrowing from banks to stay in business and pay taxes, VAT, personnel expenses, salaries, rents, etc. - decide to reduce / suspend our activities, covering the lay-off regime: a solution that sees no revenue, but constant costs. In any case, entrepreneurs have to keep 35% of the wage costs, normally borne by the state in other countries and continue to pay IUP / rents and, in the case of the lay-off extension, we must also provide a training course for employees, therefore, more costs, with no prospect of reopening. As we struggle to figure out how to survive a high season that may not arrive (because it also depends on the issuing countries), we ask: what are the details about the positive cases in Cape Verde? Of the positive cases found, how many are asymptomatic or have mild symptoms? How many people hospitalized by Covid-19 are in intensive care and on which islands? This would help many of us to better understand the current situation of the virus and to try to predict its effects on the population and thus on the local economy.

Anyway:

We want the reopening of borders as soon as possible, because we are sure of the investments made by the Government in the health area and we are confident that the protocols will be complied with in establishments open to the public.

We want to be free to walk publicly respecting the rules, using the mask only in the necessary situations.

We want IGAE to continue to do its job and encourage the improvement of minimum hygiene standards for EVERYONE.

We want it to be publicly communicated to tour operators and their insurers that they can send tourists, that we are ready and that Cape Verde is a safe destination.

We want to see tour operators busy with the rapid reopening of hotels and resorts, as well as the development of residential tourism, for which our two associations are already working together with the Ministry of Tourism.

We want to see people working and smiling again! We want to be part of those who contribute to the country's socio-economic growth!

We are sure that these are also wishes of the Government. So, consider us your partners on this path. We are ready and proactive to do our part!

Cape Verde, 14 September 2020

Sal - Small and Media Enterprises Association  
Boavista - Association of Economic Tourism Operators

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