



## VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT URGED TO ASSIST LOCAL TRAVEL AGENTS

Skål International requests that the Venezuelan government meet its financial obligations with the airlines that service the country in order to protect the livelihood of over 2,000 travel agencies and up to 60,000 workers.

States Skål World President, Karine Coulanges

“We have been contacted by Skål members in Venezuela requesting we, along with others in the international travel and tourism community, urge the Venezuelan government to meet its ticketing payment obligations with the airlines to stop the potential closure of up to 2,000 travel agencies and the loss of up to 60,000 jobs in the country.”

Given the considerable sum of Bolivars that the national and international airlines have received from the travel agents and that the Venezuelan Government has not passed on in foreign currency for more than a year the airlines have decided, amongst other things, to decrease (since September 2013) the number of seats on its flights. The reduction was at a moderate level to start with but has now increased to the point where it sits at a reduction of 95% of the seats available. One can already see pictures online of flights leaving Caracas with only one or two passengers.

This action by the airlines has affected the principal sales outlet for the airlines – the travel agencies – with a decrease in the sales of its principal product – airline tickets – of around 95% leading to “red” figures in their balance sheets over the past two quarters and the situation has caused the closure of a number of travel agencies. Sources in Venezuela have advised Skål International that they believe that if this lasts another month then 50% of the travel agencies in the country will be forced to close. The travel agencies have worked with the airlines to ensure that the government pays its debts, including via street protests, in the media and on social however, they state they have not received support in return from the airlines.

States Karine Coulanges “We urge both parties, the airlines and the Venezuelan government, to sit down at the table and negotiate the matter rather than allow the travel agency industry in Venezuela to collapse causing even more economic hardship for all parties.”

“We must point out that this request comes from a purely economic standpoint of trying to assist our members and the industry in Venezuela and that Skål International will never become involved in the domestic politics of any country”.

ENDS

*About Skål International:*

### **VISION STATEMENT:**

*Be a Trusted Voice in Travel and Tourism*

### **MISSION STATEMENT:**

*Through our leadership, professionalism and friendship, work together to enhance our Vision, maximise networking opportunities and develop a Responsible Tourism Industry.*

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