



May 3, 2022

**To:** Business & Human Rights Resource Centre

**From:** Booking Holdings Ethics and Compliance Department

**Re:** Survey on Human Rights Due Diligence in the context of the Ukraine / Russia conflict

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Dear Mr. Rayman and Ms. Dobson,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to respond to your survey regarding the steps Booking Holdings and Booking.com have taken to address human rights risks related to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Please find our responses to your questions below.

### **Our Business in Ukraine**

#### **Nature of involvement**

Booking.com provides services in the travel and tourism industry in Ukraine and has done so since 2011. We operate throughout the country in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, which means that we have ceased doing business in some parts of the region per sanctions requirements.

#### **Assessing risks**

We are fully committed to respecting human rights and our human rights policies are designed to align with the UNGPs. We are also committed to conducting enhanced human rights due diligence in conflict-affected and high risk situations, including Ukraine. As prescribed by the UNGPs, if we were to find that we are causing, contributing to, or directly linked to negative human rights impacts, we will take appropriate action to prevent or mitigate that risk.

We are continuously monitoring the situation and current risks on the ground, and are also taking steps to anticipate the exacerbation of future negative human rights impacts in Ukraine and globally that may arise as a result of the conflict and attendant refugee crisis. This process includes, but is not limited to, stakeholder consultations, monitoring customer reviews and feedback, communications with our business partners in the region, and partnering with international organizations operating in Ukraine. We are of course fully committed to the safety and security of our employees in the region and are in regular contact with them. We have also established resources for employees globally who may be impacted by the conflict and who need additional support.

## **Mitigating risks and tracking effectiveness**

Booking.com operates an online travel agency. Booking.com conducts business in compliance with applicable laws in the countries where it operates and conducts business, which includes not engaging in prohibited activities in Crimea as well as the so-called Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic.

Booking.com takes the data security and privacy of our partners and guests very seriously. We have developed comprehensive data and privacy policies. Ukraine is no exception and we are continuously monitoring any additional risks to data rights and privacy that might arise in the context of the conflict situation.

Even before the war escalated in late February, we were communicating on a daily basis with our colleagues in Ukraine. Throughout this process we remind our employees of the available security awareness resources how to maintain personal and company data safe and secure. While supporting their evacuation from conflict areas and rehousing them in safe locations, we maintained strict security measures.

In addition, due to complexities in the region, Booking.com has suspended travel services in Russia (including Crimea) and Belarus. We have allowed customers to cancel reservations in Ukraine at no cost, and continue to provide support to all of our partners with respect to managing their business on our platform. We have also introduced an initiative to help our partners offer free, or highly discounted short-term accommodations for refugees from the war in Ukraine, with all partner fees for those bookings waived.

We have scaled down or suspended operations in specific regions of Ukraine in line with international restrictions and safety considerations, but are committed to maintaining operations as long as it is safe to do so in order to support travel and accommodation needs of Ukrainians and anyone who needs to travel within the country.

We continue to monitor and assess regulatory, security, and human rights risks in all countries in which we operate including with respect to Ukraine and will make determinations about future activities in line with the outcomes of that due diligence.

## **Exercising leverage**

We are deeply concerned about the devastating war unfolding in Ukraine and stand with all those who are suffering. We continue to do all we can for the safety of our colleagues, customers, and partners while supporting humanitarian efforts. This includes a donation to support humanitarian efforts on the ground, and the introduction of an initiative to help our partners offer free, or highly discounted short-term accommodations for refugees from the war in Ukraine, with all partner fees for those bookings waived. Through this initiative we aim to harness the power of technology and passion of our accommodation partners who, like us, want to help where they can.

## **Our Business in Russia**

### **Nature of involvement**

We have two legal entities in Russia, established in 2009 and 2015. These companies support Booking.com B.V. (our Dutch headquarters) by promoting the Booking.com service to accommodation partners, performing accommodation market research, and supporting accommodation partners locally by teaching them how they can improve their performance on our Booking.com platform. Those entities combined have over 50 employees in Russia, supporting accommodation partners across Russia.

Booking.com conducts business in compliance with applicable laws in the countries where it operates and conducts business, which includes not engaging in prohibited activities in Crimea as well as the so-called Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic. In addition, due to complexities in the region, Booking.com has suspended travel services in Russia (including Crimea) and Belarus.

### **Assessing risks**

Booking.com works with a range of reputable external advisors and conducts a routine horizon scanning to apprise itself of changes in regulatory or risk landscape. This includes working with human rights consultants and experts on our human rights due diligence globally as well as in Ukraine. We are also enhancing our response to human rights risks that may arise due to the longer-term impacts of the conflict and refugee crisis, such as human trafficking, discrimination, and violence. Our due diligence includes robust stakeholder engagement, communications with employees, partnership development with international organizations and others working on humanitarian aid in the region.

### **Mitigating risks and tracking effectiveness**

Before suspending travel services in Russia (including Crimea) and Belarus, we engaged in robust consultations with employees, stakeholders, as well as human rights experts as part of our decision-making process. We are continuously monitoring the situation and conducting due diligence to understand the longer-term human rights impacts of our decisions to suspend operations and make every decision in this regard with a view to protecting the rights of our employees, customers, and other affected stakeholders.

Booking.com takes sanctions compliance seriously and has adopted a risk-based compliance program to ensure compliance with applicable laws by identifying, assessing and responding to sanctions risks, including: third party risks, the nature of our products and services, risk of sanctions breaches, and political trends.

Booking.com took immediate measures to prepare and respond to sanctions related to the Russia/Ukraine War to ensure compliance with applicable laws. These measures are embedded in our compliance program.