FACILITATION PANEL (FALP)

TWELFTH MEETING

Virtual, 13-23 July 2021

Agenda Item 8: Other Business

ADVANCING ACCESSIBILITY IN AVIATION

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This paper highlights concern regarding accessibility in aviation for all passengers globally, including the most vulnerable, such as those with disabilities. The number of elderly and persons with disability travelling by air continues to increase, as they take advantage of increased opportunities for domestic and international air travel. However, there are still many barriers that limit the ability of elderly and disabled persons to take full advantage of international air transportation services, such as different requirements and at times even incompatible, lack of laws or enforceable standards for accessibility throughout the passenger journey. The paper also reports on the level of implementation of Annex 9 provisions relating to facilitation of the transport of persons with disability, obtained through an online survey (State letter EC 6/3-21/25, refers), the results of which will facilitate the development of a Compendium of regulations, statutes and polices regarding accessibility in aviation.

Action by the FAL Panel:

The Panel is invited to consider the recommendations in paragraph 3.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 During the Tenth Meeting of the Facilitation Panel (FALP/10, 10-13 September 2018), the Panel considered Working paper FALP/10-WP/15 on the need to continue to advance accessibility in aviation for persons with disabilities. In its consideration of WP/15, the Panel broadly supported the continued advancement of accessibility in aviation. While welcoming the suggestion to developing a report focusing on
current and emerging barriers as well as data gaps on the subject, the Panel advised that in light of constraints in resources, it might be preferable to follow previous practice in ICAO, and develop a Compendium on Member States’ national laws and regulations in order to gather baseline data on best practices and potential gaps in a cost-effective way that can be posted on the ICAO website. The Panel agreed that States interested in contributing to this study should contact the Panel Member from Canada who, in turn, would liaise with the Secretariat with a view to discussing the best way forward.

1.2 At the Fortieth Session of the ICAO Assembly (A-40, 24 September – 4 October 2019), Canada, on behalf of Australia, Airport Council International (ACI) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA), presented a paper that noted that medical advances and new assistive and other technologies are making it more feasible for people with disabilities to travel by air and that barrier-free air services play an important role in allowing passenger with disabilities (PWD) to live with independence and dignity. In order that such barriers to air travel are reduced, and in recognizing the importance of increasing awareness and continuing to collaborate to advance accessibility in aviation, the Assembly endorsed the proposal, put forward in the paper, that Member States should be encouraged to provide information to ICAO to support the development of a compendium of regulation, statutes, and policies relating to accessibility in aviation.

1.3 Assembly Resolution A40-16, Consolidated statement on the continuing ICAO policies related to facilitation, urges Member States to, inter alia, give due regard to Doc 9984, Manual on Access to Air Transport by persons with disabilities in their implementation of relevant provisions of Annex 9.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The number of elderly and persons with disability travelling by air continues to increase, as they take advantage of increased opportunities for domestic and international air travel. However, there are still many barriers that limit the ability of elderly and disabled persons to take full advantage of international air transportation services. These barriers, in addition to having an adverse humanitarian effect on many potential air travellers, have proven to be more challenging with the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2 There is not a global approach to meeting the needs of the large and growing population of travellers with disabilities; often requirements are different and at times even incompatible. In many parts of the world, there are no laws or standards and passengers with disabilities have no certainty or confidence in the level of service they will receive. Although there is ICAO guidance for PWD travelling by air, they are often ignored. Clear, unequivocal, consistent and above all enforceable standards for accessibility throughout the journey would be a major step forward in giving persons with disabilities the confidence to travel.

2.3 The pace at which new technology is being introduced in airports increases the likelihood of facilities for persons with disabilities not being considered. More airports have introduced self-service check-in machines instead of staffed desks. Some PWD may have difficulties to use such technology, either because the screen and controls are too high or because there is no audible instruction on their usage. Modern airports operating on a commercial basis are increasingly designed as major retail outlets rather than simply as points of departure and arrival. This often means that the size of terminals and the distances that have to be covered from check in to departure gate have increased in recent years. Additionally, a distressing event is the loss or damage to mobility equipment and inconsistent practice in the immediate action needed to restore mobility to the person concerned.

2.4 The way in which information is provided to persons with disabilities before and during the journey is essential, especially for the majority of people who do not fly frequently, as it is difficult to know what questions to ask or what to expect, including what the boarding process will entail. Clearer and more
comprehensive information and communication about every step of the journey would help to inform and empower passengers with disabilities. Additionally, lack of training to relevant airline and airport personnel can affect staff providing direct assistance to PWD. Commitment to training at all levels is fundamental to improving standards.

2.5 The working group lead by the FALP Member from Canada has developed a survey that mirrors the relevant Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) of Annex 9 – Facilitation, aimed at collecting information from Member States on their regulations, statues, and policies relating to accessibility in aviation. As shown in the Appendix, on 1 June 2021, ICAO issued State letter EC 6/3-21/25 requesting States to complete the survey by 21 June 2021, which is available in the six official languages of ICAO. The results of the survey will facilitate the development of a Compendium of regulations, statues, and policies relating to accessibility in aviation. As of 30 June 2021, the Secretariat has received replies to the Survey from 76 States and 2 Special Administrative Regions (Hong Kong and Macao). More time is needed to analyse the replies.

2.6 The High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021), planned in October 2021, will consider measures to mitigate the many barriers that limit the ability of elderly and persons with disabilities in times of abnormal processes, such as during health-related pandemics, to take full advantage of international air transportation services including steps to be taken to ensure that airport facilities and services are adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Panel is invited to:

a) review the information contained in this paper;

b) advise if it has been noticed that access to air travel for Persons With Disabilities has worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic;

c) agree that the working group, led by the FALP Member from Canada continue its work on advancing accessibility in aviation by developing a compendium of regulation, statutes, and policies relating to accessibility in aviation; and

d) advise on how to increase the level of implementation by Member States of the relevant Annex 9 provisions by giving due regard to ICAO Doc 9984, Manual on Access to Air Transport by Persons with Disabilities.
Subject: Survey on Advancing Accessibility in Aviation

Action required: Complete the online Survey on Advancing Accessibility in Aviation by 21 June 2021

Sir/Madam,

I have the honour of drawing your attention to the deliberations of the 40th Session of the Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization (24 September - 4 October 2019) on matters relating to persons with disabilities and their accessibility to aviation. Relevant working papers can be found on the ICAO website at https://www.icao.int/Meetings/a40/Pages/WP_Agenda.aspx, under agenda item 14.

The Assembly, inter alia, in recognizing the importance of increasing awareness and continuing collaboration in the advancement of accessibility in aviation, agreed that Member States should be encouraged to provide information to ICAO to support the development of a compendium of regulation, statutes, and policies relating to accessibility in aviation.

Accordingly, a working group of ICAO’s Facilitation Panel has developed a survey that mirrors the relevant Annex 9 SARPs. The results of the survey will be used to develop the proposed compendium.

The online survey, is available in the six official languages of the Organization at the links provided in the Attachment. The survey may also be completed using the attached form following which the responses should be returned by email to: fal@icao.int. I would be grateful if your administration would complete the survey in consultation with relevant stakeholders as soon as possible, but no later than 21 June 2021.

Accept, Sir/Madam, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Fang Liu
Secretary General
Enclosure
Survey Advancing Accessibility in Aviation
ATTACHMENT to State letter EC 6/3- 21/25

ADVANCING ACCESSIBILITY IN AVIATION

Name of State:

The online survey is available in ICAO’s six official languages – Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish, at the following links:
Arabic: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BRQ6ZDC; Chinese: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SWGR6VH
Spanish: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7L35YCN

(Please check (√) the box — YES or NO — and provide comments, if any).

1. Does your State have policies, regulations, or statutes giving persons with disabilities equivalent access to air transportation?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, go to Question 2. If no, go to Question 5.

2. Please indicate whether your policies, regulations, or statutes include the following, as set out in the recommended practices outlined in Annex 9.

   a) Provisions requiring new or refurbished aircraft to conform, where aircraft type, size, and configuration permit, to standards of accessibility with respect to on-board equipment (including movable armrests, onboard wheelchairs, accessible washrooms, and suitable lighting and signs).

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide links to the related policies, regulations, or statutes.

__________________________________________________________________________________________

   b) Provisions requiring the transportation of disability aids needed by persons with disabilities at no additional charge.

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide links to the related policies, regulations, or statutes.

__________________________________________________________________________________________
c) Provisions requiring the transportation of service animals needed by persons with disabilities, in the cabin of the aircraft on the floor at the person's feet, at no additional charge.

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide links to the related policies, regulations, or statutes.

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d) Provisions allowing persons with disabilities to travel without providing medical clearance/ a medical certificate.

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide a brief description of any exceptions.

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e) Provisions allowing assistants required by persons with disabilities to travel with them at a discounted price.

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide links to the related policies, regulations, or statutes.

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3. Does your State have a program for validating compliance by airlines and/or airports related to accessibility in aviation?

   Airlines ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Airports ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please share any or all aspects of this program as well as a brief summary of the program, and links to the related policies, regulations, or statutes.

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4. Does your State have any policies, regulations, or statutes related to the following issues?

   a) That airlines and/or airports provide special assistance to ensure passengers with disabilities receive information and services customarily available to the general public. Examples include but are not limited: to safety briefings; accessible inflight entertainment; accessible wayfinding information; and/or accessible kiosks.

   Airlines ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Airports ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, please provide a brief description of the policies, regulations, or statutes.

b) That airlines and/or airports establish and publish minimum standards of accessibility for persons with disabilities.

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If yes, please provide a brief description of the policies, regulations, or statutes.

5. Does your State require airports, airlines, or other entities to provide the following facilities or services?

a) Lifting devices, ramps, or other means of assisting persons with disabilities to board and disembark the aircraft when level entry is not available?

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If yes, please provide links to the related policies, regulations, or statutes.

b) Flight service related information in an accessible communication format for the vision and hearing impaired?

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Airports □ Yes □ No

If yes, please provide links to the related policies, regulations, or statutes.

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c) Designated pick-up and drop-off points for persons with disabilities close to the entrances and exits of the terminal building?

Airlines □ Yes □ No
Airports □ Yes □ No

If yes, please provide links to the related policies, regulations, or statutes.

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d) Accessible ground transportation services for persons with disabilities (where access to public transport services is limited)?

Airlines □ Yes □ No
Airports □ Yes □ No

If yes, please provide links to the related policies, regulations, or statutes.

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e) Adequate parking facilities for persons with disabilities?

Airlines □ Yes □ No
Airports □ Yes □ No

If yes, please provide links to the related policies, regulations, or statutes.

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6. Have any service challenges for persons with disabilities, especially in any of the following categories been identified?

a) Accessibility of travel related information. □ Yes □ No

If yes, please provide a description and any available supporting data.

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b) The transportation of service animals. □ Yes □ No

If yes, please provide a description and any available supporting data.

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c) Wheelchair service requests. □ Yes □ No
If yes, please provide a description and any available supporting data.

____________________________________________________________________________

d) Aircraft accessibility. □ Yes □ No

If yes, please provide a description and any available supporting data.

____________________________________________________________________________

e) The transportation of disability aids. □ Yes □ No

If yes, please provide a description and any available supporting data.

____________________________________________________________________________

f) Airport accessibility. □ Yes □ No

If yes, please provide a description and any available supporting data.

____________________________________________________________________________

g) Emerging trends. □ Yes □ No

If yes, please provide a description and any available supporting data.

____________________________________________________________________________

7. Does your State collect any other data or statistics not covered in question 6 that would be beneficial to this study?
   □ Yes □ No
If yes, please provide a description and any available supporting data.

____________________________________________________________________________

8. What other challenges do you face implementing ICAO standards and recommended practices in the area of accessibility in aviation? Please provide a brief summary of any implementation challenges.

____________________________________________________________________________

9. When developing policies, regulations, statutes, training programs, plans, or reports on accessible aviation, does your State consult any of the following?

   a) Stakeholders from the community of persons with disabilities. □ Yes □ No
   b) Airports □ Yes □ No
   c) Airlines □ Yes □ No
   d) Other □ Yes □ No

If yes, please identify how these consultations are carried out.

____________________________________________________________________________
10. Does your State promote any best practices regarding accessibility in civil aviation? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide a description and any available supporting data.

____________________________________________________________________________

11. What measures would be useful to assist States in developing programs for enhancing accessibility, building capacity, and/or in collecting statistical data on accessible aviation?

____________________________________________________________________________

Details and signature of the person completing this form:
Name: …………………………………………………………………..
Official Title/Position: …………………………………………………
Mailing address: …………………………………………………………
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Telephone number: ………………………………………………………
E-mail address: ………………………………………………………

Please return completed questionnaire by **21 June 2021**
by email to: (fal@icao.int); by fax: +1 514 954-6077; or
by mail to: Facilitation Section, Air Transport Bureau
International Civil Aviation Organization
999 Robert-Bourassa Boulevard
Montréal, Quebec
Canada H3C 5H7

— END —