



Chair's Summary of Ministerial Plenary Round Tables I and II of the ICAO High-level Conference on COVID-19

The Ministers responsible for civil aviation/transport in Member States of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), as well as the invited Heads of international and industry organizations, gathered at the Ministerial Plenary (Round Tables I and II) from 12 to 13 October 2021 during the ICAO High-level Conference on COVID-19.

Participants held very fruitful discussions virtually over the two days on the two interrelated topics: leading aviation recovery (for Round Table I) and building resilience and sustainability (for Round Table II). The results of the two Round Table discussions were also considered in the preparation of the Ministerial Declaration, to be adopted at the Ministerial Plenary (Closing) on 22 October 2021.

This document captures, from my perspective as a Chairperson of the meeting, highlights of their discussions.

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At the outset, participants acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic is far more than a health crisis; it has caused immense economic and social distress throughout the globe. While aviation is one of the most heavily affected sectors, global supply chains, emergency and humanitarian responses and the swift vaccine distribution rely predominantly on air transport. Beyond that, aviation is a major economic enabler and catalyst with many sectors depending on the reliable and efficient air transport system.

A global crisis calls for a globally harmonized response. Participants commended the work of the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) and the Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA), and underlined the usefulness of recommendations and guidance provided to support their States' recovery efforts. The recommendations of particular mention included the Targeted Exemption system, the lifting of restrictions on air cargo, the establishment of Public Health Corridors, the implementation of testing certificates, and the need for fair and equitable treatment of passengers.

Recognizing the massive impact of the pandemic on the financial viability of the aviation sector, participants stressed the need to continue to provide adequate financial and regulatory support measures when deemed necessary. Such measures should be implemented in an inclusive, targeted, proportionate, transparent, and temporary manner, which shall preserve market dynamics and take into account international obligations. In the face of limited availability of resources for crisis response and competing priorities, orchestrate efforts are required from all relevant entities, including financial institutions, international partners, and the private sector.

When a State is ready to adopt an "exit" strategy, i.e. a national-wide risk management strategy aimed at reducing the need for public health risk mitigation measures, opening up travel and reactivating local

economies, the aviation sector requires particular attention. Confronting difficult trade-offs associated with health, economic and social challenges, the crucial role of aviation to support the fight against the pandemic and wider economic recovery should be taken into account. A shared view was expressed by participants as to the utmost importance of defining multilayer risk management strategies for international civil aviation which are adaptable, proportionate, non-discriminatory and guided by scientific evidence.

Restoring and strengthening passengers' confidence in air travel is essential to the full resumption of travel, trade and supply chains and their post-pandemic growth. In this regard, a speedier and safer contactless travel should be promoted while satisfying public health measures and reducing risk of disease transmission. Participants highlighted the benefits of integrating automated and digitalized solutions in air transport operations to ensure fast and secure exchange of data and information. The interoperability and mutual recognition of, and accessibility to such solutions is a core enabling component for achieving this objective. In addition, new technologies can allow governments to develop consistent and agile response frameworks to future crises, including flight restrictions, crew treatment measures, passenger testing and vaccination requirements, travel health data exchange, and other emergency response.

Participants also discussed the emerging shifts engendered by the impact of the pandemic and highlighted their actions and initiatives to enhance the sustainability of aviation in all three aspects – social, environmental and economic. There was a shared view that lessons should be drawn from the current pandemic in order to reinforce the long-term foundation of the aviation sector against future threats, while acknowledging that every crisis holds an element of uncertainty and unpredictability. Moreover, they stressed the importance of strengthening the sectors' flexibility and adaptability to the ongoing, long-term transformation of economies, society and consumer behaviours. States' and ICAO's key responsibility is to prepare a proper post-COVID-19 policy response, which will rely on improved risk management and crisis preparedness, underpinned by innovative solutions such as digitalization.

A significant component of the way forward will be the retention and attraction of qualified and competent aviation professionals to effectively respond to the ongoing change of economies, operations and business models, and for the sustainable growth of the aviation sector.

Collective engagement of States and industry serves as the main engine to navigate aviation through the course of recovery to resilience. Participants agreed to seize this opportunity to strengthen the international framework and arrangements for a coordinated and streamlined response to future crises, and to renew global intra- and cross-sectoral cooperation for more prompt and coordinated crisis management.

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I am very pleased to see the strong and robust unity of Ministers to address these challenges and to enable the swift but safe and efficient recovery of civil aviation. I highly appreciate the valuable contributions of participants.

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