



WORKING PAPER

ASSEMBLY — 40TH SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 21: United Nations 2030 Agenda- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

**ICAO'S ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF UNITED NATIONS 2030 AGENDA –
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)**

(Presented by the Council of ICAO)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 39th Session of the ICAO Assembly adopted Resolution A39-25, Aviation's contribution towards the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Resolution demonstrates how the delivery of the results of ICAO Strategic Objectives, especially through the implementation of the *No Country Left Behind* (NCLB) initiative, contribute significantly to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This working paper presents a report on ICAO's activities in support of the United Nations 2030 Agenda - Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as the cooperation and partnerships with States and other United Nations bodies to achieve related targets.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) encourage Member States to report on aviation, as an enabler of sustainable development, within their national voluntary review delivered at the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development;
- b) encourage States to include clear references to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) in their national aviation plans, with the objective of showcasing the contribution of aviation to the UN SDGs and national economies; and
- c) adopt the revised Assembly Resolution which is contained in the Appendix to this paper.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to all Strategic Objectives and all Supporting Implementation Strategies (SIS).
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<i>Financial implications:</i>	The activities referred to in this paper will be undertaken subject to the resources available in the 2020-2022 Regular Programme Budget and/or from extra budgetary contributions.
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<i>References:</i>	Resolution A39-25, Aviation contribution towards the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Resolution A39-23, <i>No Country Left Behind</i> (NCLB) Initiative A/RES/70/1, Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development C-WP/14788, Draft ICAO Business Plan for 2020-2021-2022 A40 WP/XX, Pacific Small Islands Developing States (PSIDs) Aviation Needs Analysis Doc10075, <i>Assembly Resolutions in force (as of 6 October 2016)</i>
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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 On 1 January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — adopted by all UN Members States in September 2015 — officially came into force. These Goals are a commitment by the global community at large to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development by 2030 worldwide, while ensuring that no one is left behind. The adoption of the UN 2030 Agenda was a landmark achievement, providing for a shared global vision towards sustainable development for all. The 39th Assembly adopted Resolution A39-25 which outlines actions to be undertaken by ICAO Members States, its Council and Secretariat, related to aviation's contribution towards the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

1.2 Ever since the adoption of Resolution A39-25, ICAO has been fully committed to work in close cooperation with States and other global stakeholders, to contribute to the realization of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular through the implementation of the *No Country Left Behind* (NCLB) Initiative. Aviation provides connectivity, which supports global socio-economic development, especially in the least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). As such, aviation facilitates global access to business, trade and tourism when other forms of transportation might be unavailable or inefficient. Forecasts indicate that air traffic volumes will double in the next 15 years. This might lead to opportunities, which could enable States to achieve the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. UPDATE ON AVIATION'S CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS THE SDGs

2.1 Advocating the benefits of aviation in support of the SDGs

2.1.1 In its advocacy and outreach, ICAO has been illustrating how its work around the Organization's five Strategic Objectives is supporting the SDGs. This analytical mapping illustrates that ICAO is facilitating 15 out of the 17 SDGs. The mapping provides a powerful testimony on just how deeply the Strategic Objectives and the SDGs are intertwined, and is published on the ICAO public website at <https://www.icao.int/about-icao/aviation-development/pages/sdg.aspx>.

2.1.2 Under ICAO's leadership the international aviation sector set collective global aspirational goals to improve annual fuel efficiency by 2 per cent and achieve carbon neutral growth from 2020 onwards. With a view to achieve these global aspirational goals in support of the SDGs, important progress on the development and implementation of a "basket of CO₂ mitigation measures" is being made. The "basket" includes advancements in aircraft technology, operational improvements, sustainable aviation fuels, and the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSA) - the first-ever market-based instrument to address carbon emissions of a major industry sector at the global level.

2.1.3 In 2016, ICAO launched the Aviation Partnerships for Sustainable Development (APSD) to sensitize States, the United Nations, the private sector, as well as the financial institutions and other stakeholders, on aviation's role as a catalyst for the SDGs. In doing so, ICAO also invited the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS), the World Bank Group (WBG), and the Air Transport Action Group (ATAG) to join. Since 2016, the APSD members have been advocating aviation's essential role towards the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at strategically chosen events. In 2017, ICAO collaborated with Airports Council International (ACI), the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO), the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the International Coordinating Council of Aerospace Industries Associations (ICCAIA) to develop the

Aviation Benefits Report, which illustrates how aviation is advancing socio-economic progress in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2.1.4 In addition, the ICAO World Aviation Forum (IWAF), organized yearly in a different region, is a prime opportunity to identify needs, facilitate financing, foster partnerships and share information and best practices, aiming to accelerate the implementation of ICAO's Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) at the national level, in support of the NCLB initiative and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2.1.5 While aviation has no dedicated Goal, the international community has increasingly recognized the importance of air transport as an enabler to achieve the SDGs. In December 2017, the UN General Assembly's Economic and Financial Committee approved a resolution focused on strengthening the links between all modes of transport to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The resolution acknowledges the importance of aviation and ICAO's work in advancing the SDGs. It puts special emphasis on least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS), and underscores that increased investment in infrastructure, intermodal transport and connectivity are of essence to integrate global economies, which will drive growth and help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. With respect to supporting SIDS in achieving the SDGs, ICAO is currently undertaking an Aviation Needs Analysis, for the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) with due consideration to PSIDS vulnerabilities, and to assess how civil aviation could alleviate some of the PSIDS challenges and support their sustainable development. A progress report has been submitted under Agenda Item 20 of the Executive Committee (A40 WP/xxx refers).

2.1.6 With the recognition that sustainable transport and mobility are fundamental to advance the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the World Bank invited ICAO to join the Sustainable Mobility for All (SuM4All) Initiative – a group of 50 leading organizations and agencies in the transport sector committed to supporting transport policies and systems that would transform mobility on a global scale. In 2017, the Sum4All released the first ever Global Mobility Report, in which aviation is strategically positioned. The report was featured in 40 prime media outlets and reached more than 3 million people.

2.1.7 During the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, States are invited on a yearly basis to voluntarily present their reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels. The voluntary national review (VNR) progress reports aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda. ICAO's outreach and visibility at carefully chosen events, as well as its continuous advocacy with national stakeholders to include aviation as an enabler of sustainable development within their VNR progress reports is reaping results. Based on a comprehensive analysis of a total of 107 VNRs submitted by 98 UN Member States from 2016 to 2018, the number of VNRs referencing aviation has more than tripled (from 25% to 77% of VNRs). Over the course of three years, 62 out of 98 States referenced aviation in their VNRs – up from 5 States in 2016.

2.1.8 Among States referencing aviation in their VNRs, a growing number also connect such references to a wider range of SDGs. In all the VNRs, the number of SDGs referenced increased from 4 in 2016, to 8 in 2018. Furthermore, strong anecdotal evidence indicates that States are increasingly considering the ICAO Strategic Objectives as important contributors to achieving the SDGs. The report located on the ICAO website¹ and in Appendix B to this paper, illustrates selected country cases, around

¹ https://www.icao.int/secretariat/SecretaryGeneral/SPCP_Docs/18April19%20VNR%20Report.pdf

all seven ICAO regions, that display a strong connection with the ICAO Strategic Objectives. This shows that ICAO's continuous advocacy on how aviation supports 15 out of 17 SDGs is received positively by Member States. By including aviation within the VNR reporting, the States underscore the strong link between aviation and development.

2.2 Enhancing sustainable aviation through robust planning and monitoring at the global, regional and national levels

2.2.1 Assembly Resolution A39-25 refers to the effective implementation of SARPs and policies, as well the inclusion of aviation into the national development plans² – in support of the SDGs. The 13th Air Navigation Conference recommended States to create cohesive linkages between the different global aviation plans and have the SDGs clearly referenced within each of them. In support of this objective, ICAO has developed guidance for its Member States to establish a National Aviation Planning Framework³ that ensures sustainable development of air transport by prioritizing and coordinating the implementation of initiatives to improve the safety, security, facilitation, capacity and efficiency of their air transport systems. This approach will enable sustainable growth of air transport at the State, regional and global levels, resulting in significant socio-economic benefits, including increasing the predictability of funding for sustainable aviation.

2.2.2 ICAO continuously contributes to monitoring efforts of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and is an official observer on the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, as well as the custodian agency of SDG indicator 9.1.2, *Passenger and Freight Volumes, by Mode of Transport*. In this capacity, ICAO has the opportunity to contribute to the annual global SDG progress report, as well as provide and update the indicator documentation. This, in turn, is helpful when making the case for financing and investments into transportation infrastructure and formulating policies that are furthering multimodal transport connectivity. These are expected to promote the sustainable growth of the transportation sector and accommodate the forecasted increase of passenger and freight traffic in developing regions and fast growing economies.

2.3 Targeted partnerships to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

2.3.1 Partnerships and collaborative relationships are central to ICAO's core mission. As the global forum of States for international civil aviation, ICAO proactively fosters cooperation, collaboration and coordinated approaches to achieve its 5 Strategic Objectives.

2.3.2 Reinforced in Resolution A39-25, 'strengthening partnerships' is identified in the ICAO Business Plan as a key activity to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of ICAO's work. Aiming to provide guidance on the policies, processes and procedures related to ICAO partnership activities, the Secretariat developed a Partnership Framework to identify targeted partnerships to achieve the SDGs.

2.3.3 The ambitious UN 2030 Agenda requires equally bold changes across the United Nations system. To better serve the world, the UN system is repositioning itself to better achieve results at the country level and is now undergoing one of the most ambitious and comprehensive change processes of the UN development system in decades. ICAO, as a specialized UN agency, has been invited to join the

² States may use different terminology to define national plans and frameworks.

³ *ibid*

reinvigorated UN Sustainable Development Group. The Organization is currently evaluating the benefits of such partnership for its Member States.

2.3.4 Innovations are playing a significant role in helping aviation become safer, more efficient, economically viable, secure and environmentally friendly. Air transport today is on the brink of major transformations, including the increasing deployment of drone technology, the launch of autonomous, suborbital and supersonic activities, as well as other innovations, such as artificial intelligence and block chain technologies. It is of utmost importance for ICAO, in partnership with appropriate stakeholders, to follow these developments very closely so as to better deliver on the SDGs.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 ICAO invites its Member States to enhance their advocacy efforts in support of the SDGs. To accelerate the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and firmly position aviation as an enabler of the SDGs, Members States are encouraged to include references to the SDGs in their national aviation plans. To illustrate the fundamental role of aviation for achieving the SDGs, Member States are encouraged to include aviation in their voluntary national reviews at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

**APPENDIX A
DRAFT ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION**

40/xx: Aviation's contribution towards the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Recognizing that air transport is a catalyst for sustainable development and that it represents an essential lifeline for Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and especially for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to connect to the world;

Recognizing that air transport connectivity is of utmost importance for the economic, social and territorial cohesion of Member States and their populations;

Recognizing that the benefits enabled by air transportation can only materialize if States have a safe, efficient, secure, economically viable and environmentally sound air transport system;

Whereas the *No Country Left Behind* (NCLB) initiative aims at assisting States in effectively implementing ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) plans, policies and programmes, as well as addressing Significant Safety and Security Concerns so as to ensure that all States have access to the significant socio-economic benefits of air transport;

Whereas the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* that includes a set of seventeen universal and transformative goals supported by 169 targets that balance the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development;

Recalling that the scale and ambition of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development call for a global partnership that will bring together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors to mobilize all available resources for its implementation;

Whereas the delivery of ICAO Strategic Objectives on safety, air navigation capacity and efficiency, security and facilitation, economic development of air transport, and environmental protection contribute to the attainment of the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

Recognizing that the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is the prime venue where States, through the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), deliver an update on annual progress and challenges on implementation towards the achievement of the SDGs at a national level;

Recognizing the importance of global frameworks to support the Strategic Objectives of ICAO;

Recognizing the importance of effective implementation of regional and national plans and initiatives based on the global frameworks;

The Assembly:

1. *Urges* Member States to recognize the significant contributions of aviation to sustainable development realized by stimulating employment, trade, tourism and other areas of economic development at the national, regional and global levels, as well as by facilitating humanitarian and disaster response to crises and public health emergencies;
2. *Directs* the Council and the Secretary General, within their respective competencies, to demonstrate that ICAO continues to serve as an advocate for aviation by raising awareness among Member States, including relevant authorities beyond the air transport sector, the United Nations system, the donor community and all relevant stakeholders about aviation's contributions to sustainable development and the attainment of the SDGs;
3. *Urges* Member States to report on aviation, as an enabler of sustainable development, within their VNRs, through establishing linkages with other relevant SDGs;
4. *Encourages* Member States to include clear references to the UN SDGs in their relevant national plans, with the objective of showcasing the contribution of aviation to the UN SDGs and national economies;
5. *Urges* Member States to enhance their air transport systems by effectively implementing SARPs and policies while at the same time including and elevating the priority of the aviation sector into their national development plans supported by robust air transport sector strategic plans and civil aviation master plans, thereby leading to the attainment of the SDGs;
6. *Directs* the Secretary General to consider the special needs and characteristics of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, identified within the framework of the United Nations, in the coordination, prioritization, facilitation and implementation of assistance programmes aimed at enhancing their air transport systems;
7. *Directs* the Secretary General to continue monitoring and reviewing, when applicable, the contributions made towards the attainment of the SDGs through the implementation of ICAO Strategic Objectives and work programmes;
8. *Directs* the Secretary General to ensure that ICAO participate, when applicable and in alignment with its Strategic Objectives, in appropriate mechanisms put in place to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development so that aviation is recognized and prioritized as such by Member States in their development plans;
9. *Requests* the Secretary General to enhance existing and establish new partnerships with Member States, the aviation industry, the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, financial institutions, donors and other actors to assist Member States in enhancing their air transport systems with a view to contributing, consequently, to the attainment of the SDGs; and
10. *Declares that* this Resolution supersedes A39-25 on United Nations 2030 Agenda- Sustainable Development Goals.

APPENDIX B

**2016-2018 VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS (VNRs):
THE CRITICAL ROLE OF THE AVIATION SECTOR TO ACHIEVE THE SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

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1. Summary

"Transforming our World – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" including its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets was adopted on 25 September 2015 by Heads of State and Government at a special UN summit. The Agenda is a commitment to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development by 2030 worldwide, ensuring that "no one is left behind".⁴

As stipulated in the United Nations 2030 Agenda, Member States are encouraged to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are State-led and State-driven. These reviews take place on a yearly basis and their results are presented at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), which takes place every July at the United Nations in New York. The reviews presented at the HLPF are voluntary and undertaken by both developed and developing countries. To facilitate an in-depth review of progress and challenges at the national level, the HLPF invites States to make their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) to be comprehensive voluntary reviews focused on a specific number of SDGs in line with a unique theme which is set on a yearly basis.



Aviation has no dedicated SDG and as such the HLPF isn't expected to feature an analytical discussion on aviation. In 2016, the 39th session of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a specialized UN agency, approved a resolution that illustrates the close interlinkages between aviation and the SDGs. In 2017 ICAO undertook a mapping which clearly demonstrated how the sector is supporting 15 out of the 17 SDGs. The international community is now gradually starting to recognize aviation as an enabler of the SDGs as well.

In 2019 ICAO analyzed how many States in their Voluntary National Reviews featured aviation since 2016. The results, which are presented in this report, show a promising trend. Based on a comprehensive analysis of a total of 107 VNRs submitted by 98 UN Member States from 2016 to 2018, the number of VNRs referencing aviation has more than tripled (from 25% to 77% of VNRs). Over the course of three years, 62 out of 98 States referenced aviation in their VNRs – up from 5 States in 2016.

Among States referencing aviation in their VNRs, a growing number also connect such references to a wider range of SDGs. In all the VNRs, the number of SDGs referenced increased from 4 (SDG 8, 9, 11, 16) in 2016 to 8 (SDG 4, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, and 17) in 2018. Furthermore, strong anecdotal evidence indicates that States are increasingly considering the ICAO Strategic Objectives as important contributors to achieving the SDGs. All this is testimony to ICAO's work in outreach and advocacy highlighting how its work in achieving its 5 Strategic Objectives covering Safety, Security, Efficiency, Economic Viability and Environment responsible efforts is supporting the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

¹ Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, at: <http://bit.ly/1Epf648>

2. Background

On 1 January 2016, the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** officially came into force. Its adoption was a landmark achievement, providing for a shared global vision towards sustainable development for all. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is universal and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relate to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Due to the interlinked nature of these goals and targets, the 2030 Agenda is also indivisible and must be implemented in an integrated manner. The 2030 Agenda's scale, ambition and approach are unprecedented. It requires States, bilateral and international organizations, international financial institutions, academia and civil society to work together in the pursuit of better and more sustainable future for all.

The **High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development** is the United Nations' central platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. Ever since its inception in 2016, the annual HLPF provides policy guidance and recommendations on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It also offers opportunities for States to share how implementation of various SDGs has been integrated in their national policies, strategies, and development plans to date.

During the HLPF, States report on a voluntary basis. These **Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)** are State-led and State-driven⁵. They are comprehensive in nature with a particular focus on a set of selected SDGs in line with an annually chosen theme: e.g. "Ensuring that no one is left behind" (2016); "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world" (2017); "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies" (2018). The Voluntary National Reviews aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNRs also seek to strengthen policies and institutions of governments and to mobilize multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the SDGs.

Between 2016 and 2018, 11 SDGs have been reviewed in in-depth – with SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals) being reviewed annually.



⁵ Paragraph 79, 84 Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, at: <http://bit.ly/1Epf648>



3. Aviation and SDGs

3.1. Enabling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Aviation has no dedicated SDG. Expect for a reference in SDG indicator 9.1, which measures passenger and freight volumes by mode of transport, there is no clear mention of aviation within the SDG targets that measure progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) being a specialized UN agency with a unique mission to achieve international civil aviation that is safe, secure, efficient, economically viable and environmentally responsible, is the custodian agency responsible to collect and analyze data on SDG 9.1.

However, **aviation is an essential enabler of the SDGs**. In 2017, airlines worldwide carried around 4.1 billion passengers. They transported 56 million tonnes of freight on 37 million commercial flights. Every day, airplanes transport over 10 million passengers and around USD 18 billion worth of goods. This indicates the significant economic impact of aviation on the world economy, which is also demonstrated by the fact that aviation represents 3.5 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) worldwide (2.7 trillion US dollars) and has created 65 million jobs worldwide. Aviation provides the only rapid worldwide transportation network, generating economic growth, creating jobs, and facilitating international trade and tourism.

Aviation also plays an essential role in enabling assistance to States and regions affected by natural disasters, conflicts and pandemics. Air transport has proven to be a catalyst for sustainable development as it serves as the main mode of transportation to deliver humanitarian relief, particularly to Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Air operators assist in the evacuation of people stranded by natural disasters or victims of conflict. Airports have become staging points for first responders, relief supplies, cargo deliveries and refugee transfers.

In 2016, the 39th Assembly of ICAO adopted a resolution demonstrating how the delivery of the results of ICAO's Strategic Objectives, especially through the implementation of the No Country Left Behind (NCLB) Initiative contributes significantly to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development. In 2017 ICAO analyzed the linkages between its 5 Strategic Objectives and the SDGs. This mapping illustrates how ICAO's work is directly supporting 15 of the 17 SDGs⁶. This mapping can also be extrapolated to the aviation sector at large. For example, through the aviation sector's work on Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), the sector directly impacts SDG 3, which focuses on ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being for all at all ages. UAS (drones) are being used by the UN and the private sector alike to deliver much-needed life-saving drugs to hard-to-reach communities or transport blood samples from these communities to nearby clinics.

ICAO has done extensive outreach and advocacy with States and stakeholders to illustrate how aviation is an enabler for sustainable development. Through a vast array of events and strategic messaging the Organization is showcasing that progress on the SDGs would be hampered, if aviation would come to a stand-still.

3.2. Recognizing aviation as a catalyst to achieving the SDGs

The **international community** is now gradually starting to recognize air transport as an essential enabler to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In December 2017, the UN General Assembly's Economic and Financial Committee approved a resolution focused on "Strengthening the links between all modes of transport to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals". The resolution acknowledges the importance of aviation in advancing the SDGs. Aviation is also part of the pioneering work and analysis being done by the Sustainable Mobility for All (SuM4All) Initiative. The SuM4All includes 50 leading organizations and agencies in the transport sector committed to supporting transport policies and systems that would transform mobility on a global scale. Air transport is firmly represented in the 2017 Global Mobility Report⁷ and efforts are now ongoing to finalize the Global Roadmap for Action, which lays out a pathway for planners, public decision-makers and the private sector to further world's progress toward sustainable mobility.

The **State-led and State-driven Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)** are a great measure to gauge the States' acknowledgement of air transport's major role in promoting and fostering sustainable economic development. The awareness that aviation serves as the enabler of achieving the SDGs has been consciously raised among States, in particular with the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). ICAO's continuous advocacy on how aviation supports 15 out of 17 SDGs is being positively received by its Member States as well. The VNRs are pivotal in determining the progress made towards the achievement of the SDGs and in doing so they also reflect an analysis of contributing and enabling sectors. As such, it is important to understand how well aviation is reflected in the VNRs and continue to encourage and work with Member States to present more structured VNRs with substantial inclusion of aviation and aviation's close linkage with all relevant SDGs.

⁶ ICAO Strategic Objective's Mapping <https://www.icao.int/about-icao/aviation-development/pages/sdg.aspx>

⁷ <http://sum4all.org/publications/global-mobility-report-2017>

4. Aviation in the 2016-2018 Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs): an analysis

4.1. Scope and Objectives

This report aims to demonstrate how the States are using the VNRs to showcase the contribution of aviation towards the SDGs. This analysis is developed on the basis of a holistic content review of a total number of 107 VNRs⁸ submitted by 98 UN Member States⁹ to the UN HLPF from 2016 to 2018. The analysis provides both a quantitative and a qualitative perspective, highlighting evidence from the VNR review which demonstrates that the advocacy with States on aviation's contribution to the SDGs had an increasingly positive impact.

The following questions guided the analysis and framed the final conclusions:

- 1) Do States refer to progress made in the aviation sector?
- 2) Do States link aviation's contribution with specific sustainable development goals?
- 3) Do States mention any ICAO Strategic Objectives when reporting on specific SDG achievements?

4.2. References to Aviation in VNRs

A thorough review of the 107 VNRs indicates that 62%¹⁰ of the VNRs submitted between 2016 -2018 contain references to aviation. Results of this analysis show that there is an upward trend from 2016 to 2018 (Figure 1). In 2018, the 77% of VNRs referenced aviation – up from 25% in 2016.

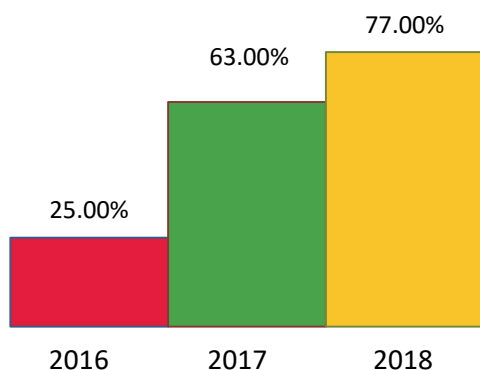


FIGURE 1: Rate of Reference to Aviation Sector in 2016-2018 VNRs

Findings show that between 2016 and 2018, seven States reported in their VNRs on upgrading air transport infrastructure, including air navigation system, airports and the efficiency of operating system. Five States reported on actively supporting and participating in the efforts led by ICAO to address global emissions from international aviation transport. The benefits of enhancing interconnectivity and global connections thanks to air transport is addressed in the VNRs of eight States, in particular Uganda (LLDC, 2016), Zimbabwe (LLDC, 2017) and Nepal (LLDC, 2017). A number of States also use in their VNRs

⁸ 111 VNRs presented at Voluntary National Reviews Database, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>. Scope of research is based on 107, full version VNRs with UN official languages that published on the website.

⁹ 102 UN Member States participated in the Voluntary National Reviews. 98 States participated in 107 VNRs within scope of research. It is important to note that some States over the years presented more than once a VNR.

¹⁰ 62%: 66 out 107 of VNRs references to aviation

statistics illustrating progress made in aviation. For example, Denmark (2017) and Nigeria (2017) reported on data related to SDG indicator 9.1 on passengers and freight by mode of transport. Indonesia (2017) reported on the indicator related to number of airports based on hierarchy. Lebanon reported data on the airport of Beirut's activity in 2018. Indonesia (2017), Albania (2018) and Latvia (2018) reported on the number of passengers using air transport. Saudi Arabia (2018) also reported data related to the development of airports to sustain economic growth, including number of passengers, airports and annual volume of air cargo.

4.3. References linking aviation to a specific SDG

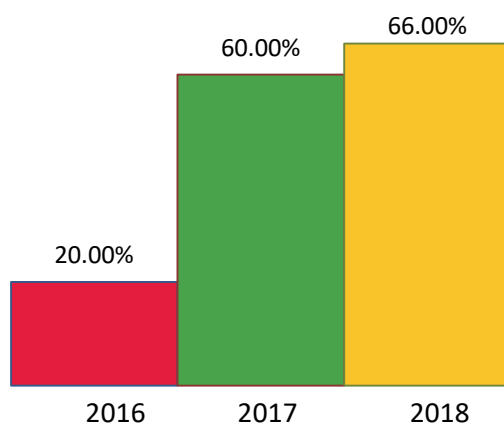


FIGURE 2: Share of VNRs with Aviation References to SDGs in 2016-2018 VNRs

Over three years, 59 VNRs link aviation to the SDGs. The total number of references specifying this type of linkage is 75. Aviation plays an instrumental role in supporting sustainable development. ICAO is supporting the global indicator of SDG Target 9.1 – passenger and freight volumes by mode of transport – by serving as the lead agency responsible for collecting and sharing data on related air transport indicators from amongst its 193 Member States. While aviation is not even specifically mentioned in the indicators or targets of SDG 9¹¹, it is undeniable that aviation is a key driver and contributor that benefits not only SDG 9 but the implementation as well of other relevant SDGs. The VNR analysis confirms this statement and shows an increasing trend from 2016 to 2018 in the number of VNRs that indicate clear linkages between aviation and specific SDGs (Figure 2). In general, only 20% of the VNRs in 2016 identified how aviation supports specific SDGs. In 2017 and 2018, reporting on linkages between aviation and specific SDGs jumps to 60% and 66% of VNRs respectively.

This analysis also considered the issue that the number of countries reporting on aviation might vary depending on which SDG is being reviewed in depth in a particular year. For instance, when SDG 9 or SDG 11 is being reviewed at the HLPF we would anticipate more references to aviation. Data contained in Figure 3 indicates that even so - States started to gradually recognize the cross-disciplinary nature of aviation and how it supports different SDGs. In 2016, States established a link between the aviation sector and SDGs for only four Goals (SDG 8, 9, 11, 16). This number grows to eight in 2018 (SDG 4, 8, 9,

¹¹ SDG 9.1.: Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.

SDG9.1.2.: Passenger and freight volumes, by mode of transport.

11, 13, 14, 16, and 17) (Figure 3) indicating that aviation increasingly is becoming a catalyst for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

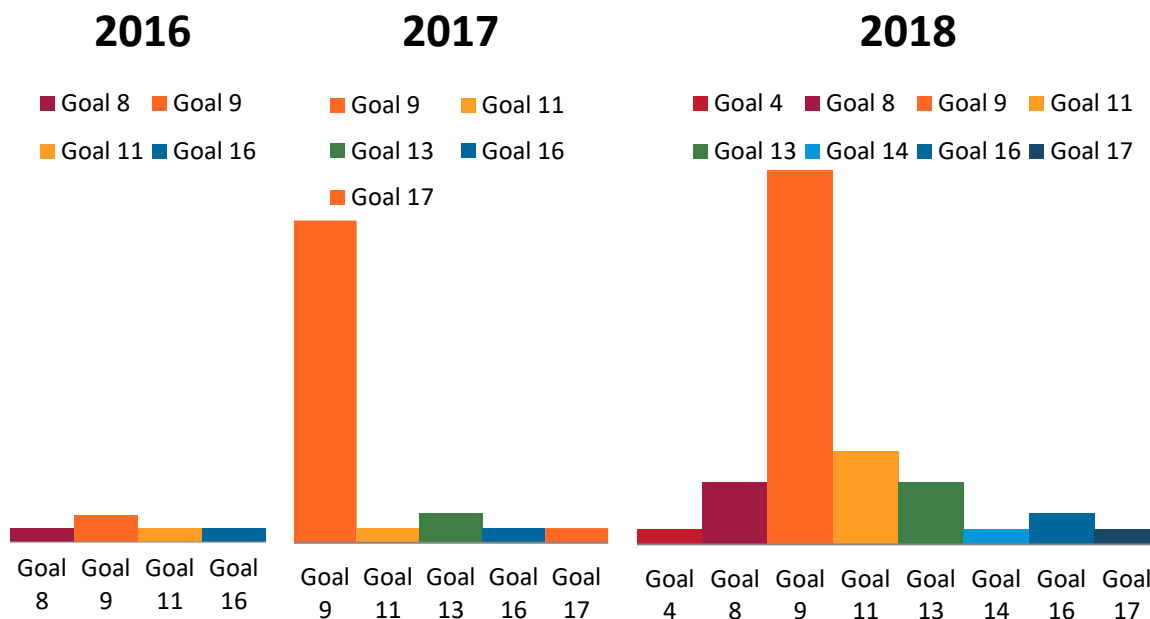


FIGURE 3: VNRs with Aviation References to Specific SDG per Year

Most Frequently Referred SDG Linkages with Aviation (Figure 4)

SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure): 64% of the total references of SDG linkages with aviation in VNRs delivered between 2016 and 2018 relate to SDG 9. Air transport is mentioned through references of airport construction, navigational infrastructure and urban infrastructure development. For example, Bhutan (2018) indicated the importance of upgrading two domestic airports and promoting sustainable transportation, including air transport to meet the objectives of “Bhutan Transport 2040: Integrated Strategic Vision”. France (2016) is helping to develop infrastructure such as airports through French Agency Development to support transition in Africa. Saudi Arabia (2018) applied automation and artificial intelligence solutions in airports operations.

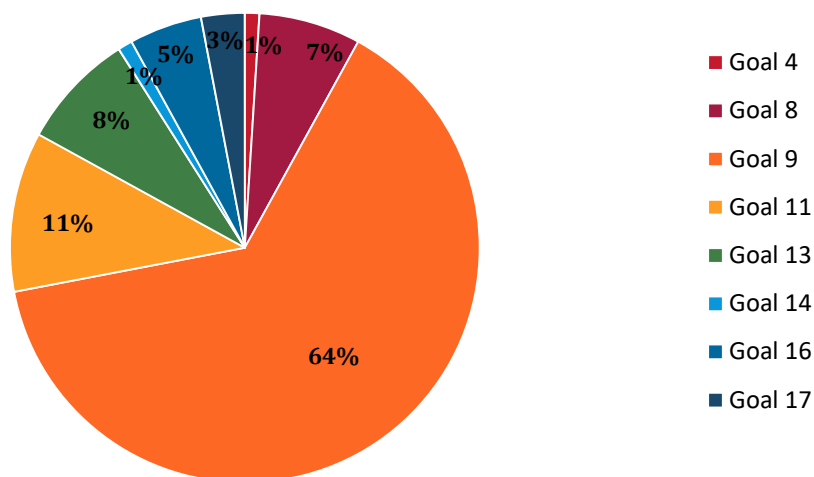


FIGURE 4: Share of Total Number of References to SDG Linkages 2016-2018

SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) - 11% of the total references of SDG linkages with aviation in VNRs delivered between 2016-2018 indicate that aviation-related infrastructure is a major part of urban and rural communities worldwide. Viet Nam (2018) has policies to encourage development and use of public passenger transport in urban areas, including aviation industry.

SDG 13 (Climate Action) - urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, is a key priority for every responsible citizen or organization. 8% of VNRs delivered between 2016-2018 linking aviation to the SDGs refer to SDG 13. Singapore (2018) and United Arab Emirates (2018) specifically address global mechanism of aviation emissions. Saudi Arabia made reference to fuel efficient aircrafts and United Arab Emirates reported on flight fuel made from salt-tolerant plants.

Five States refer to aviation in the context of **SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth), mostly in the context of economic development and trade. Four States refer to peaceful and inclusive societies in the aviation sector related to **SDG 16** (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), such as aviation safety. For example, in Lithuania (2018), national system of passenger record data was established which allows persons travelling by air who can pose a potential threat to public security to be identified. United Arab Emirates (2018) is the only State which reports on linkages between aviation and its national education strategy in sectors including aircraft engineering technology, air navigation management **SDG 4** (Quality Education). Nepal (2017) and Lebanon (2018) reported on **SDG 17** (Partnerships for the Goals) for civil aviation projects to meet capacity building needs.

Between 2016 and 2018 a few States submitted multiple VNRs – allowing for a comparison to be made between several reports. For example, Columbia, Mexico and Egypt in their 2016 VNRs did not reference aviation while in 2018, progress in the aviation sector was reported under SDG 9 referring to airport upgrades. Benin referenced aviation when reporting on SDG 9 in both 2017 and 2018. Togo illustrated how the aviation sector helped to improve economic growth and trade in 2017 and mentioned the modernization of the international airport in 2018. Qatar reported on the construction of a new international airport when updating the HLPF on SDG 9 in 2017. In 2018, Qatar referenced the growth of

air traffic in the new international airport in its reporting on SDG 11. Qatar has also included the expansion and modernization of air and sea transport facilities and the upgrade of related operating systems by the end of 2022 as targets to be achieved under the National Development Strategy 2018-2022.

4.4. References to ICAO's Strategic Objectives

ICAO through its five Strategic Objectives (Safety, Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency, Security and Facilitation, Economic Development and Environmental Protection) continuously supports 15 of 17 SDGs. In 2016, ICAO launched the No State Left Behind Initiative (NCLB) to strengthen efforts in support of ICAO's Strategic Objectives and the SDGs at the State level. The NCLB Initiative, through its support to States on effective implementation of ICAO's Standards and Recommended Practices, policies, plans and programmes in a globally-harmonized manner, is directly contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

The five comprehensive ICAO Strategic Objectives were established in 2014 and since then have been continuously guiding the development of the aviation sector at both the global, regional and State levels. Engaging with Member States in achieving the five Strategic Objectives is ICAO's key mandate. Findings in this paper provide evidence on a case by case basis, to indicate that ICAO's Strategic Objectives are underscored by some Member States as an important approach to achieving the SDGs. The increased mention of aviation in the VNRs platform demonstrates the positive impact of ICAO's work towards ensuring a safe, efficient, secure, economically sustainable and environmentally responsible civil aviation sector.

- Selected State Cases:

United Arab Emirates (Efficiency, Environmental Protection): The UAE's Vision 2021 highlights the importance of infrastructure and the quality of airports, which has a heavy focus on capacity and efficiency. The State also specifically reported in the 2018 VNR on progress to reducing emissions in the international aviation sector with a focus on the CORSIA challenges.

Malta (Safety, Environmental Protection) reported its measure of updating the national aviation safety programme within the Transport Master Plan 2025 and linked it closely to SDG 11. Moreover, the Government of Malta participated in a regional Decarbonated Airport Regions (D-Air) project that took into consideration all land-based carbon sources, including aviation activity within the airport which had a potential impact on environmental protection.

Uruguay (Environmental Protection) emphasized in its 2018 VNR that it set out a plan for the reduction of CO₂ emissions in civil aviation activities under SDG 13.

Ethiopia (Efficiency, Economic Development, Security) underscored in its 2017 VNR that it had made remarkable progress on aviation capacity and efficiency. In addition, the State indicated that institutional capacity of air transport services became stronger and more competitive with greater air route connectivity. It also underscored that its handling of aviation security was in line with international standards.

Togo (Efficiency, Economic Development) reported in its 2017 VNR on the opening of the international airport making it a business hub in the sub-region. The State also indicated its plans to make sure the

Gnassingbé Eyadema International Airport followed international standards thereby increasing the airport's reception capacity.

Nepal (Efficiency, Economic Development) in its 2017 VNR reported that connectivity by air transport was improving. The government was upgrading its air transport infrastructure by building new international airports. Moreover, partnerships were being strengthened in order to develop efficient construction technology for new international airports.

The Bahamas (Efficiency, Security, Economic Development, Environmental Protection) highlighted its airport infrastructure programmes including a project aimed at improving air transport connectivity and the flow of people to the Family Islands in its 2018 VNR. Such connectivity will be done through infrastructure improvements by upgrading, rehabilitating and maintaining selected airports to comply with international aviation standards in line with climate change considerations. The Bahamas has also installed a Border Management System at the international airport in New Providence. In addition, the Bahamas reported on its tax policy with regard to concessions which will invigorate the air transportation sector.

5. Conclusions

This content analysis of the 2016-2018 VNRs provides solid evidence on State-level progress made in the aviation sector in support of the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals.

Between 2016 and 2018, 62% of the 107 VNRs reviewed included a reference to aviation. Over the three year period the rate at which States referenced aviation in their VNRs grew significantly, from 25% in 2016 to 77% in 2018. Over the course of three years, 62 out of 98 States referenced aviation in their VNRs – up from 5 States in 2016. The contribution of aviation to support specific SDGs has been clearly captured and profiled in the VNRs, in particular from Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDs). In 2018, States emphasized the linkages between aviation and SDGs 4, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16 and 17 – up from only 4 SDGs being referenced in 2016. In addition, the analysis reveals that ICAO's continuous work to promote and implement its Strategic Objectives among Member States have proven to bear fruit. This is important as the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs continue to be used by an array of donors as a measure for funding.

While there is good news, this report however also indicates there is still much work to be done.

1. **Advocacy and outreach on aviation benefits towards the SDGs should continue.** While the awareness on the benefits of aviation to selected SDGs augmented at the State-level and is increasingly being reflected in the VNRs, 8 out of the 15 ICAO supported SDGs have yet to be referenced by States as being impacted by aviation¹². As such advocacy and outreach on ICAO's mapping and the benefits of aviation towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should be intensified. Connectivity and mobility in support of socio-economic advancement should be central to the advocacy discourse. The cross-sectoral linkages of the SDGs and how

¹² SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), SDG 15 (life on land)

aviation is intertwined with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should continuously be highlighted.

2. **To adequately advance the SDGs, the aviation sector should be safe, secure, efficient, economically viable and environmentally responsible.** ICAO's Strategic Objectives guide its normative work, as well as its technical assistance and technical cooperation functions. Profiling aviation and in doing so establishing close linkages towards the importance of a civil aviation sector that is safe, secure, efficient, economically viable and environmentally responsible would be beneficial for the sector as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Greater awareness could be raised about the contribution of aviation to achieving the SDGs, which in turn, spur further development of their national air transport sectors. This will optimize opportunities for capacity building as well better incorporation of specific targets and actions in support of the SDGs in the aviation sector. It would also enable the sector to be able to negotiate the inclusion of indicators and targets on aviation and the SDGs should such opportunity come along.
3. **Aviation to be adequately reflected in national development plans.** The strategic integration of air transport into national development frameworks will enable aviation to be better reflected in national budgets. ICAO has developed guidance to support States with the development of aviation national planning frameworks and linkages with the national development plans. The adequate reflection as appropriate of aviation in national plans will in turn facilitate the reporting in the VNRs and create the necessary visibility on the importance of having a well-funded sector to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Annex I: List of States Submitting VNRs to HLPF 2016-2018

- | | | |
|------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Afghanistan | 37. Greece | 71. Panama |
| 2. Albania | 38. Guatemala | 72. Paraguay |
| 3. Andorra | 39. Guinea | 73. Peru |
| 4. Argentina | 40. Honduras | 74. Philippines |
| 5. Armenia | 41. Hungary | 75. Poland |
| 6. Australia | 42. India | 76. Portugal |
| 7. Azerbaijan | 43. Indonesia | 77. Qatar |
| 8. Bahamas | 44. Ireland | 78. Republic of Korea |
| 9. Bahrain | 45. Italy | 79. Romania |
| 10. Bangladesh | 46. Jamaica | 80. Samoa |
| 11. Belarus | 47. Japan | 81. Saudi Arabia |
| 12. Belgium | 48. Jordan | 82. Senegal |
| 13. Belize | 49. Kenya | 83. Sierra Leone |
| 14. Benin | 50. Kiribati | 84. Singapore |
| 15. Bhutan | 51. Lao People's
Democratic
Republic | 85. Slovakia |
| 16. Botswana | | 86. Slovenia |
| 17. Brazil | | 87. Spain |
| 18. Cabo Verde | 52. Latvia | 88. Sri Lanka |
| 19. Canada | 53. Lebanon | 89. State of Palestine |
| 20. Chile | 54. Lithuania | 90. Sudan |
| 21. China | 55. Luxembourg | 91. Sweden |
| 22. Colombia | 56. Madagascar | 92. Switzerland |
| 23. Costa Rica | 57. Malaysia | 93. Tajikistan |
| 24. Cyprus | 58. Maldives | 94. Thailand |
| 25. Czechia | 59. Mali | 95. Togo |
| 26. Denmark | 60. Malta | 96. Turkey |
| 27. Dominican Republic | 61. Mexico | 97. Uganda |
| 28. Ecuador | 62. Monaco | 98. United Arab
Emirates |
| 29. Egypt | 63. Montenegro | 99. Uruguay |
| 30. El Salvador | 64. Morocco | 100. Venezuela
(Bolivarian Republic
of) |
| 31. Estonia | 65. Namibia | |
| 32. Ethiopia | 66. Nepal | |
| 33. Finland | 67. Netherlands | |
| 34. France | 68. Niger | 101. Viet Nam |
| 35. Georgia | 69. Nigeria | 102. Zimbabwe |
| 36. Germany | 70. Norway | |