



ICAO and IAEA to enhance transport of vital radioactive materials

For immediate release

Montréal and Vienna, 10 November 2023 – ICAO and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have agreed to enhance their cooperation around the transport of radioactive materials by air, notably to improve the efficiency and speed of these shipments that are vital for cancer care and other medical uses around the world.

In a joint statement signed today, ICAO Secretary General Juan Carlos Salazar and IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi underscored that the agreement also “highlights the importance of adherence to the IAEA safety standards for the safe use of radioactive materials and to ICAO standards for global civil aviation safety and security.”

The agreement builds on the cooperation between both UN bodies on matters of common interest that began in 1960.

Nuclear medicine, which is based on access to radiopharmaceuticals for a variety of diagnostic uses and specific therapies, is the fundament of nuclear applications in health care. Getting radiopharmaceuticals from the manufacturer to hospitals and medical clinics depends on fast and reliable transport, including by air, as they are extremely time sensitive. Over 10,000 hospitals worldwide use radioisotopes in medicine, mostly for diagnosis.

“The IAEA’s role in ensuring the safe transport of radioactive material by air is essential in the carriage of short-lived radiopharmaceuticals and other crucial radioactive materials,” remarked ICAO Secretary General Juan Carlos Salazar. “ICAO welcomes the heightening of our collaboration in this vitally important area of mutual interest.”

Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director General of the IAEA, said: “It is very important that the work the IAEA and ICAO undertake in developing and strengthening the implementation of international standards is complementary. The IAEA greatly values ICAO’s long-standing contribution to the development and review of IAEA safety standards. We can work even more closely together in other areas of common interest, such as in reducing denials of, and delays in, shipment of radioactive material by air.”

The agreement encompasses the development and review of relevant IAEA safety standards and the harmonization of best practices globally, with the IAEA and ICAO collaborating to collect and analyse associated information.

Raising stakeholder awareness through education, training, and outreach are also foreseen, including around emergency preparedness.

Radiation research and information exchange towards radiation protection in civil aviation, especially regarding cosmic radiation exposure to flight crews, is a further focus of the agreement.

Today’s joint statement highlights that the “stronger mutual cooperation will create a conducive environment for countries to harness the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear technology in meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals,” and helps set the stage for deeper collaboration in the near future.



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About ICAO

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is a United Nations agency which helps 193 countries to cooperate together and share their skies to their mutual benefit.

Since it was established in 1944, ICAO's support and coordination has helped countries to diplomatically and technically realize a uniquely rapid and dependable network of global air mobility, connecting families, cultures, and businesses all over the world, and promoting sustainable growth and socio-economic prosperity wherever aircraft fly.

As it enters a new era of digitization, and of incredible new flight and propulsion innovations, air transport is relying more than ever on ICAO's expert support and technical and diplomatic guidance to help chart a new and exciting future for international flight. ICAO is innovating itself to answer this call, and expanding its partnerships among UN and technical stakeholders to deliver a strategic global vision and effective, sustainable solutions.

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