



International Civil Aviation Organization

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ASSEMBLY — 40TH SESSION

LEGAL COMMISSION

Agenda Item 40: Other issues to be considered by the Legal Commission

**RESULTS OF LABOUR SURVEY ON DISRUPTIVE PASSENGERS, STAFF PREPAREDNESS
AND CONCERNS**

(Presented by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF))

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document contains brief information based on a recent ITF survey to provide a snapshot of the disruptive passenger behaviour problem from a labour perspective.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Objectives <i>Economic Development of Air Transport</i> .
<i>Financial implications:</i>	Not applicable.
<i>References:</i>	Not applicable.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 From its day-to-day work, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is well aware of the fact that the risk of workplace violence in the transport industry, including civil aviation is high. Many transport workers face the threat of violence on a daily basis. Violent incidents have serious physical and psychological effects on transport workers.

1.2 Therefore, as a global union federation that organises workers in ships, ports, railways, road freight and passenger transport, inland waterways, fisheries, tourism and civil aviation the ITF has a great wealth of knowledge on workplace violence. For example, the ITF campaigns against disruptive passenger behaviour in the civil aviation industry, it keeps a close watch on the cruise ship industry and organises a day of global action to stop violence against women workers.

1.3 The ITF recently supported the creation of ILO Convention 190 – Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 at the 2019 ILO ILC Session. This convention concerns the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, and can be used as a tool to prevent the occurrence of disruptive passenger incidents.

1.4 The ITF and its transport union affiliates, which represent 18.5 million transport workers all around the world, see workplace violence as an occupational health and safety issue, which should be given the same attention as other workplace hazards.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 As explained in the Working Paper *Progress With Regard To Promotion Of The Protocol To Amend The Convention On Offences And Certain Other Acts Committed On Board Aircraft (Montreal Protocol 2014)*, disruptive passenger behaviour in the civil aviation industry is a growing problem and poses a severe danger to flight safety.

2.2 The data available indicate an increase over the years. However, as widely accepted, they may also reflect underestimates, as reporting typically included only actual violence but seldom addressed threatening behaviour.

2.3 In May 2019, the Civil Aviation Section of the ITF conducted a global survey through all of its affiliated aviation unions, in 117 countries, in all regions of the globe, i.e., Africa, Asia/Pacific, the Middle East, North America, Latin and South America, and Europe to provide a snapshot of the problem from a trade union perspective.

2.4 The survey aims to examine the situation and the changes regarding this problem over the last five years. Just to put on the record, a series of surveys conducted by the ITF in the late 1990s and early 2000s showed that the majority of airlines and ground service companies did not have proper policies and procedures to deal with disruptive passenger behaviour at the time.

2.5 As it is the case with all workplace violence, the ITF believes that there is a need for a holistic approach and a multi-level action to combat the problem of disruptive passengers. Accordingly, in addition to cabin crew, our survey includes check-in staff and other ground staff. Airport check-in staff are the first in contact with travelling passengers and the logical first line of defence for public safety in airports.

2.6 Moreover, the highest percentages of ITF’s women transport members are employed in the civil aviation industry as cabin crew and check-in personnel. Thus, women aviation staff are at the front line in dealing with irate and aggressive air passengers. Unsurprisingly, disruptive passenger behaviour frequently involves sexual harassment. Consequently, our survey sheds light on the gender aspect of this severe problem.

2.7 The empirical results presented in this information paper are based on the assessments obtained from civil aviation union affiliates of the ITF, not from the individual members of each affiliate.

2.8 The aviation unions responding to our survey organise members in almost all the major international, medium-sized as well as smaller carriers. They also organise members in all major global and local ground handling companies.

3. OUTCOMES OF THE SURVEY

3.1 The findings of our survey, unfortunately, reveal a disturbing picture.

3.2 “*Question 1: Over the last five years, have the number of incidents due to unruly and disruptive passengers increased, decreased or stayed about the same?*” Table 1 shows that the vast majority of aviation unions believe that the problem has been escalating over the last five years.

Table 1

	Number of unions	%
Increased	190	75,7
Stayed about the same	50	19,9
Decreased	11	4,4

3.3 “*Question 2: On a scale of 1 to 5, how concerned is your union about unruly and disruptive passengers? (1 = not concerned, 5 = very concerned.)*” In line with the response to the first question, more than 80 per cent of the aviation unions took part in the survey are deeply concerned about this problem.

3.4 “*Question 3: On a scale of 1 to 5, how prepared do your members feel to handle a violent situation caused by unruly and disruptive passengers on board? (1 = not concerned, 5 = very concerned.)*” When it comes to being prepared to handle violent situation caused by unruly and disruptive passengers on board, most of the aviation unions are mildly concerned. However, a significant minority corresponding 32 per cent of aviation unions are still “very concerned” about the preparedness of their members.

3.5 “*Question 4: Which of the following types of violence are reported most by your members? (Please number the top 5.) (The options were: Wounding, kicking, biting, punching, spitting, scratching, squeezing/pinching, threats, aggressive posturing, rude gestures, swearing, shouting, name-calling, innuendo, racism, sexism and harassment.)*” According to aviation unions, the top five types of violence reported most by union members are as follows (ordered from the most frequent to the least frequent): Swearing, shouting, aggressive posturing, threats and rude gestures. These were followed by name-calling, harassment, sexism and innuendo.

3.6 “*Question 5: When the violence perpetrated by unruly and disruptive passengers is based on their prejudice of someone else, this is considered a hate incident and/or a crime. Please number the top 3 characteristics for prejudice. (The options were: Race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, transgender and other.)*” The top three characteristics for prejudice reported by the aviation unions are race, gender and sexual orientation.

3.7 “*Question 6: Do members of your union receive training to handle violent situations caused by unruly and disruptive passengers on board?*” Only eight per cent of aviation unions reported that their members don’t receive any form of training to handle violent situations caused by unruly and disruptive passengers on board.

3.8 “*Question 7: Does the training specifically cover violence and harassment that may be caused by prejudice against any of the above characteristics?*” On the other hand, according to 38 per cent of aviation unions, the training that their members receive doesn’t specifically cover violence and harassment that may be caused by prejudice against any of the characteristics mentioned in the question number 5.

3.9 “*Question 8: If your answer is yes to 6 or 7, is that training adequate?*” More than one-third of the unions that responded positively to questions number 6 and 7 believe that existing training levels are not adequate.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The findings of the ITF survey indicate a number of challenges confronting not only aviation unions but all stakeholders in the civil aviation industry. The existence and degree of work-related violence faced by cabin crew, check-in staff and other ground service staff is very high. The level of the perceived risk of violence is also substantial in these occupations. In addition to other steps that need to be taken by all stakeholders in dialogue and in a coordinated fashion, these findings indicate the urgent need for closing legal loopholes that allow unruly passengers to escape law enforcement for serious offences.

4.2 The Assembly is invited to note the information contained in this Paper.