



ICAO

International Civil Aviation Organization
Asia and Pacific Office

Seventeenth Meeting of the Asia Pacific Regional Aviation Safety Team (APRAST/17)

Bangkok, Thailand, 24-27 January 2022 (Video Teleconference)

Agenda Item 5: Presentations – State /Industry / ICAO

OUTCOMES OF THE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON COVID-19 (HLCC 2021) – SAFETY STREAM

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This paper presents outcomes of the Safety Stream of the High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021).

Action by the APRAST is in paragraph 3.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021), virtually broadcasted from Montréal from 12 to 22 October 2021, discussed ten agenda items under two technical streams: the Safety Stream discussed Agenda Items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 and the Facilitation Stream discussed Agenda Items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. The Conference was attended by 1,786 members and observers nominated by 129 Member States and 38 international organizations, as well as by advisers and others. 56 Ministers and Deputy Ministers, and 24 heads of international organizations attended the Ministerial Plenary sessions of the Conference.

1.2 The HLCC 2021 made 147 recommendations under the Safety Stream on matters related to its agenda. Most of the recommendations consist of two parts: a) calls for action addressed directly to States, with some also addressed to international organizations; and b) calls for action by ICAO.

1.3 With respect to all agenda items, some of the work called for by the recommendations:

- a) are either already being progressed, or can be accomplished, by expert groups;
- b) can be fulfilled through the dispatch of State letters or other communication means including rollout plans;
- c) are being progressed, or can be accomplished, by the Secretariat within the current Work Programme of the Organization; or
- d) will require new tasks in the Work Programme of the Organization, which may require additional resources and creation of new expert groups.

1.4 This working paper presents an overview of the recommendations of the Conference under the Safety Stream, which are relevant to the RASG-APAC Work Programme. At the time of publishing this working paper, recommendations can be found in the Yellow Cover Report, available on the ICAO website, at: [Yellow Cover Report \(icao.int\)](https://www.icao.int/yellow-cover-report).

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Under the Safety Stream, the recommendations adopted by the Conference cover a wide range of subjects including:

- a) safety and operational measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the establishment of contingency arrangements by States, lessons learnt and how to plan for mitigating the effects of a similar occurrence in the future;
- b) the Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP), the implementation of regional and national aviation safety plans, as well as evolving regulatory capacity in aviation;
- c) standardization associated with the oversight and new approaches, risk management, as well as ground handling;
- d) implementation and support to States in accomplishing certain safety oversight, accident and incident investigation as well as safety management functions and activities;
- e) other subjects that were not covered by a specific agenda item, including accident and incident investigation, Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme Continuous Monitoring Approach (USOAP CMA), Global Air Navigation Plan, the global aeronautical distress and safety system (GADSS) as well as impact of 5G to safety critical radio altimeter functions safety and operational measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2 The follow-up to the recommendations of the Conference will involve considerable work, which may be tasked to ICAO expert groups, include panels, study groups and the Secretariat.

2.3 **GASP, and implementation of regional and national aviation safety plans**

2.4 The Safety Stream reviewed working papers regarding comments on the 2023-2025 edition of the GASP, including the Secretariat proposals developed through the GASP Study Group (GASP-SG). The Safety Stream agreed on:

- a) the need to continue evolving the GASP, focusing on a revision of the GASP update process, including alignment with other Global Plans and the revision of GASP goals, targets and indicators;
- b) the impact of global aviation disruption events, including the COVID-19 pandemic, on strategic safety planning; and
- c) further enhancing a performance-based approach and strengthening risk management capabilities at global, regional and national levels.

2.5 The Safety Stream expressed wide support for the proposed topics for the draft 2023-2025 edition of the GASP and agreed on the need for the GASP-SG to examine the appropriate means to take into consideration input from the Conference and the questionnaire, in preparation for subsequent endorsement of the GASP at the 41st Session of the ICAO Assembly.

2.6 The Safety Stream noted the interest for the planning and implementation regional groups (PIRGs) and regional aviation safety groups (RASGs) to include the management of COVID-19 impact in their agenda and work programmes, to support a safe recovery.

2.7 The Safety Stream agreed on the need for ICAO to continue with its efforts of updating existing guidance material and tools related to the implementation of regional and national aviation safety plans. The Safety Stream also agreed on the need for the GASP-SG to examine the appropriate means to take into consideration input from the Conference to revise existing ICAO guidance materials and tools that support the implementation of regional and national aviation safety plans, in line with the GASP. Recommendations call for States to develop and implement their national aviation safety plan (NASP) and provide the most recent version of their NASP for posting on the ICAO GASP public website. ICAO will submit a global report regarding the development of NASPs at the 41st Session of the Assembly.

2.8 **Enhancing safety by advancing and strengthening regional cooperation**

2.9 The Safety Stream discussed working papers on how to enhance regional implementation support mechanisms to assist States in accomplishing certain safety oversight, accident and incident investigation and safety management functions and activities. The Safety Stream highlighted the importance of strengthening regional safety oversight organizations (RSOOs), regional accident and incident investigation organizations (RAIOs), and other regional cooperation mechanisms by providing them with the necessary resources to ensure sustainability, as well as encouraging these organizations to actively participate in the RSOO Cooperative Platform (RSOO CP); the Global Aviation Safety Oversight System (GASOS); and the coordination of assistance activities under the Aviation Safety Implementation Assistance Partnership (ASIAP).

2.10 As recovery is critical to the economic, social and connectivity of the Pacific Island States, the Safety Stream recognized the importance of increased assistance and continued support for the Pacific Island States and the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO) to ensure a safe, secure, resilient and sustainable aviation system. In The Safety Stream noted the massive impact of COVID-19 on the Pacific Island States and the restart and recovery of the aviation sector. It also noted that ICAO should work closely with PASO and its Member States by providing support and assistance to ensure the viability of the region's economic and social well-being through the sustainability of the commercial aviation sector. To maintain public confidence in the aviation system, the Safety Stream emphasized that effective implementation of the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) Recommendations, technical assistance and guidance are critical in enabling the Pacific Island States to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.11 **Increasing participation in the contributory bodies PIRGs and RASGs**

2.12 The Secretariat highlighted the low level of support, technical expertise and participation by States, international organizations and industry to the contributory bodies of the PIRGs and RASGs as a common problem across most regions. The Safety Stream noted the proposed means to increase participation in the contributory bodies of the PIRGs and RASGs and expressed its support for these activities.

2.13 The Safety Stream agreed on the need for States to support the RASGs' data-driven, State-industry collaboration model to reduce fatality risk in a post-pandemic environment. The Safety Stream recognized the importance of on-going coordination between RASGs and PIRGs, recognizing that they both have unique missions. The Safety Stream also agreed on the need for ICAO to promote the proposed model of collaboration between States and industry to establish protocols into the work of the PIRGs and RASGs, to support global aviation safety.

2.14 **Ministerial Declaration of the High-level Conference on COVID-19**

2.15 During the conference, a total of 56 ministers and deputy ministers from 52 Member States, as well as 24 heads of invited international organizations, attended the three Ministerial Plenary Sessions (Round Tables I and II, and Closing).

2.16 At the Ministerial Plenary (Closing) on 22 October 2021, ministers and deputy ministers reviewed and adopted the Ministerial Declaration on “One Vision for Aviation Recovery, Resilience and Sustainability beyond the Global Pandemic”. The Declaration is published on the conference website at: <https://www.icao.int/Meetings/HLCC2021/Pages/ministerial-plenary.aspx> and is presented in **Attachment A**. The adopted Declaration has reflected comments in response to State letter 2021/61 dated 20 September 2021 and discussions made during the Ministerial Plenary Sessions. While the Declaration is not a legally binding document, it demonstrates solidarity and determination, and conveys a strong political message to international communities and world economies.

2.17 The Air Navigation Commission (ANC) is currently reviewing HLCC 2021 recommendations for which authority to act has been delegated to the ANC by the Council. Once this review is completed, the ANC will discuss and tentatively agree to the amendment of the ICAO Work Programme which may include the addition of new tasks, derived from these recommendations. This will be accomplished as part of the ANC approval of the draft report to Council related to the Safety Stream of HLCC 2021, scheduled to take place in February 2022. The report will then be presented to the Council for final approval of the actions proposed on relevant recommendations, taking into consideration the resource implications of implementing all the recommendations that require action in the next triennium.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) note HLCC-2021 recommendations, including the Ministerial Declaration, and take action, where appropriate; and
- b) call on States in the region to provide the most recent version of their NASP to ICAO for posting on the ICAO GASP public website; and
- c) call on States to actively participate and support the work of the contributory bodies of PIRGs and RASGs; in collaboration with RSOOs RAIOS, international organizations and industry;
- d) support the RASGs’ data-driven, State-industry collaboration model to continue to reduce fatality risk in a post-pandemic environment

Ministerial Declaration of the High-level Conference on COVID-19



**“One Vision for Aviation Recovery, Resilience and Sustainability
beyond the Global Pandemic”**

(Adopted at the Ministerial Plenary (Closing) on 22 October 2021)

<https://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/Ministerial-Declaration-of-the-High-level-Conference-on-COVID-19.aspx>

We, the Ministers;

<p>- Recognizing the continued, unprecedented global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its serious public health, social and economic consequences;</p>
<p>- Recognizing also that the civil aviation sector is profoundly affected, including employment by renewed outbreaks and resulting travel restrictions, thus hampering global mobility, including of key air transport personnel as well as essential connectivity and supply chains, with a heavy strain on the global economy;</p>
<p>- Recognizing further the key role played by the operation of cargo air services, allowing for the global distribution of critical medical supplies and keeping the essential supply chains in operation;</p>
<p>- Underlining that ICAO's top and immediate priority is to enhance the cooperation among States to enable the safe and efficient recovery of civil aviation while managing risks to public health;</p>
<p>- Stressing the need to ensure the resilience and sustainability of civil aviation as an irreversible path towards recovery, inclusive growth and addressing the climate change challenge;</p>
<p>- Emphasizing that all passengers should benefit from fair and equitable treatment and the ability to travel, and that vaccination is not a precondition for travel although it is highly desirable that it be used to safely facilitate mobility;</p>
<p>- Underlining that travelling solutions should be made available to or be appropriate for all passengers, taking into consideration access to and types of vaccines, so as to ensure that no country is left behind in the global aviation recovery effort;</p>
<p>- Recalling that all States are sovereign and responsible for their own domestic public health-related measures, and remain free to implement any risk mitigation measures if and when necessary, consistent with their national legislation and international obligations;</p>
<p>- Supporting the work of the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Taskforce (CART) and stressing the importance of common standards for travel, including interoperability and mutual recognition of digital applications, as well as the importance of drawing lessons from the current pandemic to better manage future crises; and</p>
<p>- Noting with appreciation the World Health Organization's (WHO) partnership on public health risk management in the aviation sector throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, including on vaccine certification and considering the conclusions from the Safety and Facilitation Streams of the Conference;</p>

Have adopted the following Declaration:

1.	We welcome ICAO's global leadership to facilitate aviation's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure its future resilience;
2.	We commit to taking effective measures to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 and other communicable diseases by international air travel, in particular through the implementation of the ICAO CART guidelines, and encourage the harmonization of Member States' multilayer risk management strategies to safely restore international connectivity and support the revival of the global economy as a critical step towards achieving our goal to enhance the social, environmental and economic sustainability of aviation;
3.	We also commit to a multilayer risk management strategy for international civil aviation, which is adaptable, proportionate, non-discriminatory and guided by scientific evidence in close cooperation and coordination with public health sector, with agreed practices harmonized to the greatest extent possible, for air travel purposes, using commonly accepted epidemiological criteria, testing requirements and vaccination, and underpinned by regular review, monitoring and timely information-sharing among States;
4.	We will facilitate further the air transportation of vaccines as well as essential medical supplies and personnel in support of the global effort to combat the COVID-19 pandemic as well as other crises and emergencies, particularly to developing countries;
5.	We confirm the importance of support provided for the aviation sector, including economic and financial support, to sustain operations and ensure the provision of essential services while safeguarding fair competition and equal opportunities;
6.	We commit to ensuring a safe, secure, and orderly flow of traffic with operational readiness of aviation personnel, in particular aircrew and air traffic controllers, as well as the airworthiness of aircraft;
7.	We will work with ICAO and other stakeholders to ensure the interoperability and mutual recognition of, and accessibility to, digital applications, secure transmission and validation of pandemic-related testing, vaccination and recovery certification that protects privacy and personal data;
8.	We commit to promoting, to the greatest extent possible, a harmonized and inclusive approach to facilitate safe international air travel, including alleviating or exempting testing and/or quarantine requirements for fully vaccinated or recovered passengers, taking into account the different circumstances of individual States and their national policies, in keeping with WHO's policy and technical considerations for implementing a risk-based approach to international travel in the context of COVID-19 ¹ , and providing exceptions for non-vaccinated passengers. This will enable us to work towards strengthening the confidence of the travelling public and safely rebuilding international civil aviation;

9. We commit to working with international partners to build upon ICAO and WHO guidance on the establishment of bilateral, regional or multilateral Public Health Corridors, or other types of agreements or arrangements to similar effect, in particular regarding the mutual recognition of vaccines, and incorporating additional risk mitigation as required;
10. We welcome ICAO’s work in close collaboration with WHO to provide guidance on an exit strategy from existing risk management measures as the pandemic retreats;
11. We commit to ensuring that ICAO is well positioned to support the long-term resilience of international aviation and incorporate the lessons learned from the current and past pandemics, by enhancing its crisis response capability, and regularly reviewing and updating ICAO’s Standards and Recommended Practices and guidance materials as may be required;
12. We recognize the contribution of the aviation industry to climate change and the challenges posed by the latter to the long-term resilience, sustainable development and future growth of the aviation sector, as we look forward to the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP 26)² and the ICAO High-level Meeting to discuss the feasibility of a long-term global aspirational goal for international aviation³;
13. We further recognize the importance of developing mechanisms to assist and provide technical aviation support to States and their professionals in overcoming the COVID 19 pandemic leaving no one behind; and
14. We commit to uniting together to rebuild the aviation sector from the COVID-19 pandemic as soon as possible, and invite the 41st Session of the ICAO Assembly to review progress and determine further actions that may be needed.

¹<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Risk-based-international-travel-2021.1>, stating that “... national authorities in countries of destination ... may consider exempting from SARS-CoV-2 testing and/or quarantine requirements to incoming international travellers who:

- are fully vaccinated, meaning they have received the last recommended dose of a vaccine against COVID-19 listed by WHO for emergency use or approved by a stringent regulatory authority at least two weeks prior to travelling;
- have proof of previous SARS-CoV-2 infection confirmed by a real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (rRT-PCR) test received within the past 6 months and are no longer infectious as per WHO’s criteria for releasing COVID-19 patients from isolation.”

² Held in Glasgow, United Kingdom from 31 October to 12 November 2021.

³ To be held at ICAO from 20 to 22 July 2022.