

**60th CONFERENCE OF
DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONS**

*Sendai, Japan
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**AGENDA ITEM 5: AVIATION SECURITY AND
FACILITATION**

**THE IMPORTANCE OF A GLOBAL AVIATION
ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY**

(Presented by the International Air Transport Association (IATA))

SUMMARY

The number of elderly and persons with disabilities makes up a significant and growing percentage of the world's population, and is increasing through population growth, medical advances and the ageing process. Aviation, like all other transport modes, needs to recognise and accommodate this growing passenger segment to reach a disability-inclusive air transport system.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) requires its parties to take appropriate measures so that persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communication, including information technologies and systems. The Convention has also identified the need for international cooperation to create a legislative framework and a strategic approach with a concrete, enforceable and time-bound benchmark for monitoring the gradual implementation of accessibility for all.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A GLOBAL AVIATION ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The ICAO General Assembly Resolution A41-15: Accessibility in International Civil Aviation mandated the ICAO Council to develop an effective strategy and work program on accessibility for passengers with disabilities.

1.2 Recognising the clear mandate of the General Assembly, a group of states from the ICAO Working Group on Accessible Aviation under the Facilitation Panel and the industry have worked tirelessly to draft an outline of the strategic framework.

1.3 Further to the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) designating 2024 as the Year of Facilitation (FAL2024), ICAO, jointly with Airports Council International (ACI) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA), conducted a Symposium on Accessibility in International Civil Aviation on 2 and 3 December 2024.

1.4 Under the proposed theme *“Inclusive and universally accessible Air Transport for Persons with Disabilities and Reduced Mobility”*, the Accessibility Symposium addressed the facilitation of air transport for persons with disabilities and reduced mobility, as well as the challenges and efforts of States, industry, and other stakeholders to enhance international collaboration for practical solutions regarding accessibility.

1.5 The Ministerial Facilitation Conference and the Doha Declaration prioritised the inclusion and accessibility of air transport services to persons with visible and non-visible disabilities and reduced mobility by ensuring their involvement in decision-making processes, fostering data collection and sharing, and advancing personnel training, among other efforts to achieve a disability-inclusive air transport system;

1.6 The Doha Declaration aligns with the ICAO Long-Term Strategies, whose aim is to protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities, including freedom of movement.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Over the past years, the existence of barriers capable of discouraging part of the population from travelling has been a matter of concern and has gradually given rise to national regulations aimed at overcoming those limitations to the practice of activities, including air transport, which should be accessible by law.

2.2 Without a clear, consistent, and strategic global framework, regulations are fragmented and may not lay the necessary foundations to achieve accessible and universal air transport on a coordinated basis.

2.3 This fragmentation does not help passengers travel with peace of mind, nor does it facilitate the industry's consolidation of policies and processes, leaving room for interpretation by the experts responsible for the work.

2.4 Industry and states want to make sure that, as an industry, we avoid offering non-cohesive, inconsistent, or disjointed accessible services across a passenger's journey, as this would inevitably result in a less accessible journey than each actor involved in the journey would have intended.

2.5 Along these lines, IATA calls on the states of the DGCA to support ICAO in continuing to ensure the consistent design and application of its regulations, working within the international cooperation framework to avoid inconsistent service delivery.

2.6 The ICAO working group on accessible aviation has drafted a long-term disability strategy and finalised a compendium on major regulatory requirements that encompasses policies and practices designed to ensure that individuals with disabilities can travel by air safely and comfortably, including access to services, accommodations, and relevant information. The strategy and compendium will be presented for approval at the next meeting of the ICAO Facilitation Panel in December.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REGULATORS

3.1 The need of the hour is a sound response to the call to action from passengers, industry, and states in the accessibility field, harmoniously leading states, airlines and passengers. This will help elevate the existing and growing chaos in the states and industry.

3.2 It is now time to act and continue bringing national efforts into the ICAO-guided regulatory working group, which will help address the patchwork of inconsistent accessibility regulations that already act as a barrier to making air travel a comfortable and positive experience for all.

3.3 For this, it is essential that the States participating in the DGCA60 support ICAO to expand further the work of the working group on accessible aviation, to include representatives from the disability community, and to deliver its strategy and work plan for accessible aviation.

4. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

4.1 The Conference is invited to:

- (1) support the paper that IATA will present at the ICAO Assembly, recommending States Parties to support ICAO's work to strive for uniformity in their legislative design, actively involving industry stakeholders and persons with disabilities through their representative organisation in the policymaking cycle; and
- (2) recommend that States support the ICAO Working Group on Accessible Aviation actively and include representatives of the disability community.

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