

**61ST CONFERENCE OF
DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION**

*Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
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AGENDA ITEM 1: THEME TOPIC

UPDATE ON ICAO ACTIVITIES RELATING TO INNOVATION

(Presented by the ICAO Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This paper informs the Conference of ongoing activities of ICAO on innovation. It recalls the framework provided by the ICAO Policy on Innovation, approved by the Council, and the positioning of innovation as a High Priority Enabler in the ICAO Strategic Plan 2026–2050 and the Business Plan 2026–2028.

It summarizes the outcome of discussions on Innovation in Aviation at the 42nd Session of the Assembly (A42), the actions taken since then in relation to Artificial Intelligence (AI) — in particular the global survey on AI governance frameworks and the establishment of a community of AI focal points — and the next steps foreseen, subject to the guidance of the Council.

The paper further identifies forthcoming high-level conferences and Category 4 events at which States and international organizations are invited to contribute on relevant innovation matters.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Innovation is a cross-cutting element of the work of ICAO. It is positioned as a High Priority Enabler in the ICAO Strategic Plan 2026–2050 and is reflected in the ICAO Business Plan 2026–2028.
- 1.2 The theme of this Conference, “Smart Skies: Emerging Technologies for Safe, Secure, Sustainable and Efficient Aviation”, is closely aligned with a number of activities that are already underway at ICAO, both at the global and regional levels. This paper is presented to inform the Conference of these activities, so that the discussions under the theme topic and other agenda items can be linked to, and taken forward through existing ICAO mechanisms and/or frameworks.
- 1.3 This paper covers: the general policy framework for innovation (paragraph 2); the outcome of the 42nd Session of the Assembly and the actions taken on Artificial Intelligence (AI) since then, together with the next steps (paragraph 3); updates on specific innovation-related areas (paragraph 4); and opportunities for States and international organizations to contribute to forthcoming ICAO conferences and events (paragraph 5).

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The ICAO Policy on Innovation

- 2.1.1 The ICAO Policy on Innovation was approved by the Council at its 234th Session and endorsed by the 42nd Session of the ICAO Assembly (Resolution A42-25: Innovation in Aviation refers).
- 2.1.2 The Policy provides a strategic vision of the role of ICAO on innovation and is designed to assist Member States to benefit from innovation in the aviation sector. It aims, inter alia, to:
 - a) ensure the timely development of global policies, Standards, other provisions and tools related to innovations, in a technology-agnostic manner, while avoiding the premature adoption of unproven technologies;
 - b) promote an environment in which innovation in aviation can flourish in all ICAO regions, in line with the No Country Left Behind (NCLB) initiative;
 - c) make innovations known and accessible to all States, and strengthen ICAO’s engagement with stakeholders, including out-of-sector innovators; and
 - d) use innovation as a tool to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization itself.
- 2.1.3 The Plan of Action contained in the Policy provides for regular horizon-scanning to identify emerging innovations and relevant stakeholders in a timely manner; regular analysis of the accessibility of innovations for States, including the identification of barriers to implementation; the deployment of existing ICAO fora and tools, and the development of new ones as necessary, to enable collaboration and the sharing of experience; and assistance to Member States through cooperation, capacity-building and the exchange of knowledge, best practices and lessons learned.
- 2.1.4 More information may be found at: <https://istars.icao.int/Sites/Home/Innovation>.

2.2 Outcome of A42 and actions on artificial intelligence

- 2.2.2 At its 42nd Session, the Assembly considered Innovation in Aviation under Agenda Item 20. A42-WP/29, presented by the Council, highlighted the measures taken during the previous triennium to implement Assembly Resolution A40-27, including the approval of the ICAO Policy on Innovation, and proposed an update to that Resolution to strengthen its implementation, in particular by urging States and stakeholders to take action complementing that of ICAO.
- 2.2.3 A significant number of working papers submitted under this agenda item addressed AI. As recorded in paragraph 20.9 of the report on Agenda Item 20, the Committee noted the common themes arising from those papers, namely: the need for ICAO to develop comprehensive regulatory frameworks and standardized approaches to AI implementation; the need for capacity-building and training; and enhanced collaboration between ICAO, Member States, industry and academia. The Committee also noted that some States recommended that the Organization should first consider developing a strategic vision and high-level framework for the use of AI in aviation, and cautioned that developing a regulatory framework at this early stage would be premature. The Committee recognized AI as a key enabler, but urged caution in being overly prescriptive.
- 2.2.4 To ensure that the actions of the Organization in implementing this decision are properly informed, States and international organizations were asked to participate in a survey on the current status of, and future needs for, AI governance frameworks in aviation. The survey was disseminated through the ICAO Regional Offices and attracted, to date, 103 responses covering all seven ICAO regions. It also served to establish a network of AI focal points within the community.
- 2.2.5 The results of the survey will be presented to the Council at its 239th Session, together with a request for guidance on the way forward.
- 2.2.6 In parallel, the Council has designated the seventh meeting of the ICAO-Industry Consultative Forum (ICF/7), to be held in the first half of 2027, to focus specifically on AI governance, implementation and regulatory frameworks. AI is also on the agenda of a number of other ICAO fora.

2.3 REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PERSPECTIVE – ASIA AND PACIFIC

- 2.3.2 To support regional cooperation and capacity-building on innovation and emerging technologies, the ICAO Asia and Pacific Office conducted the ICAO APAC Workshop on Innovation and Emerging Technologies in Aviation in Bangkok, Thailand, on 20–21 November 2025. The Workshop brought together representatives from States, industry, academia and international organizations to discuss artificial intelligence, advanced air mobility, risk-based oversight, innovation governance, workforce development and regional cooperation.
- 2.3.3 The Workshop highlighted the importance of appropriate governance, knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and harmonized implementation approaches to support the safe, responsible and inclusive adoption of emerging technologies. Discussions also emphasized the need to strengthen institutional capabilities and workforce competencies to ensure that innovation contributes effectively to safety, sustainability and operational efficiency objectives.
- 2.3.4 Consistent with ICAO's No Country Left Behind initiative, participants recognized the value of regional cooperation in addressing implementation challenges, sharing experience and supporting equitable access to emerging technologies. The outcomes of the Workshop provide a

foundation for continued regional collaboration and complement ongoing ICAO activities relating to innovation and emerging technologies.

2.4 OPPORTUNITIES FOR STATES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO CONTRIBUTE

2.4.2 A number of forthcoming ICAO meetings will address innovation, either as their principal subject or in the context of a particular field. States and international organizations are encouraged to contribute to these events, including through the submission of working and information papers where the format of the event so permits.

2.4.3 High-level conferences (Category 1 and 2 events):

- a) the Seventh Worldwide Air Transport Conference (ATConf/7), to be held at ICAO Headquarters, Montréal, from 16 to 20 November 2026, whose Agenda Item 4 addresses emerging technologies, new business models and other associated aspects, including digitalization, artificial intelligence and advanced air mobility;
- b) the Third High-level Conference on Aviation Security (HLCAS/3), planned for 2027, which is expected to address, inter alia, technology and innovation in aviation security, including the use of AI; and
- c) the High-level Safety Conference (HLSC 2027), which the Air Navigation Commission has agreed in principle to convene in November 2027, subject to consultation with States, and which will address the full range of safety issues, including those arising from emerging technologies.

2.4.4 Category 4 events (seminars and symposia). Innovation is also addressed within the subject matter of a range of Category 4 events, including:

- a) the Twenty-First Symposium and Exhibition on the ICAO Traveller Identification Programme (TRIP) to be held in Montreal from 22 to 24 September 2026
- b) the Advanced Air Mobility Symposium (AAM 2026), to be held in Bangkok from 30 November to 4 December 2026;
- c) the Artificial Intelligence event planned for 2027;

2.4.5 The submission of papers and the active participation of States and international organizations in these fora is the most direct means by which the discussions held at this Conference can be carried into the global work programme of the Organization.

3 ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

3.1 The Conference is invited to:

- a) note the actions taken by ICAO in relation to innovation, as presented in this paper, including those arising from the 42nd Session of the Assembly in relation to artificial intelligence;

- b) encourage States and international organizations to provide input to the relevant high-level conferences, including the Seventh Worldwide Air Transport Conference (ATConf/7), the Third High-level Conference on Aviation Security (HLCAS/3) and the High-level Safety Conference (HLSC 2027); and
- c) encourage States to participate in the ICAO Category 4 events that address innovation in the context of the subject matter of the particular event.

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