

**59<sup>th</sup> CONFERENCE OF  
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ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONS**

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**AGENDA ITEM 6: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF  
AIR TRANSPORT**

**JAPAN'S EFFORTS TOWARD SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT OF GROUND HANDLING**

(Presented by Japan)

**INFORMATION PAPER**

**SUMMARY**

Ground handling, which is essential for aircraft operations, faced labor shortages due to the impact of COVID-19, etc. This paper discusses Japan's efforts toward the sustainable development of ground handling.

## JAPAN'S EFFORTS TOWARD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF GROUND HANDLING

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The entry of foreign visitors to Japan is primarily by air (98% in 2023). However, ground handling, essential for aircraft operations, had been concerned about labor shortages even before COVID-19 due to harsh working conditions and other factors. Subsequently, the sharp decline in aviation demand due to COVID-19 solidified the perception of the ground handling industry as “vulnerable” during the pandemic. In addition, the fundamental issues, such as harsh working conditions, which had been a concern for some time, remain unresolved, and as a result, the industry is facing challenges such as an increase in employee turnover and a decline in competitiveness in recruitment, particularly among young workers who tend to avoid the sector. In order to smoothly resume and increase the number of international flights at regional airports, etc., it is crucial to promote efforts to secure and train human resources, improve work conditions, and enhance productivity more than ever before.

1.2 The number of ground handling workers in Japan has temporarily decreased by about 10-20% due to the impact of COVID-19, but has now recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

	Passenger Service		Lamp Handling	
	Number of people	Compared to pre-pandemic (2019.3)	Number of people	Compared to pre-pandemic (2019.3)
2019.3	Approx. 14,100	-	Approx. 12,200	-
2023.4	Approx. 11,500	81%	Approx. 11,000	90%
2024.7	Approx. 13,400	95%	Approx. 12,400	102%

1.3 Ground handling is indispensable for aircraft operations, and the sustainable development of ground handling is critical to achieve the government goal of 60 million foreign visitors to Japan in 2030.

### 2. DISCUSSION

#### 2.1 Committee

In February 2023, a “Committee on Airport Operations for Sustainable Development” was established, consisting of experts and industry stakeholders, to ensure the sustainable development of airport operations that are indispensable for aircraft operations. The committee published an interim report in June 2023. The interim report highlighted six important perspectives for considering the sustainable development of airport operations. It outlines the current issues related to each perspective and organized directions of future efforts to address these issues.

Perspective 1: Way of working

Perspective 2: Addressing demand fluctuations

Perspective 3: Acceptance of diverse human resources

Perspective 4: Innovation

Perspective 5: Responses by individual airports based on Perspectives 1 through 4

Perspective 6: Collaboration between public and private sector stakeholders

#### 2.2 Directions of Efforts

The following are examples of the direction of efforts outlined in the interim report :

- Ensuring transparency in improving compensation through measures such as raising commission

fees (Perspective 1)

- Promoting improvements in working conditions from both tangible and intangible aspects (Perspective 1)
- Raising commission fees in line with the tight supply and demand conditions (Perspective 2)
- Creating an environment to help foreigners fit in with the local community (Perspective 3)
- Improving workplace conditions conducive to the elimination of extreme gender imbalance (Perspective 3)
- Advancing the development and demonstration, and further utilization of DX and GX technologies (Perspective 4)
- Promoting the sharing and common use of GSE vehicles, especially at local airports (Perspective 4)
- Reconsidering support by local governments (e.g. considering support measures for airports as support for attracting foreign airlines) (Perspectives 5 and 6)
- Promoting efforts to establish an industry association and to address common issues through it (Perspectives 5 and 6)

### 2.3 Efforts by the Government (Civil Aviation Bureau)

Based on the interim report and other considerations, the government (Civil Aviation Bureau) provides subsidies for the following initiatives.

- a) Securing human resources: e.g., Holding joint company briefing sessions at individual airports, etc.
- b) Human resource development: e.g., Education and training for new hires, etc.
- c) Improvement of operational efficiency: e.g., Installation of advanced equipment (guide robots, translation robots, unmanned currency exchange machines, etc.) that contributes to operational efficiency at airports, etc.
- d) Improvement of treatment: e.g., Improvement of workplace conditions through establishment of childcare facilities, rest areas, etc.
- e) Productivity improvements: e.g., Sharing and common use of equipment and materials at airports, such as GSE vehicles, etc.

### 2.4 Establishment of an Industry Association

In August 2023, following the committee's interim report, the Airport Ground Handling Association was established as Japan's first national ground handling industry association. The Association is undertaking various initiatives, including raising awareness of ground handling, improving treatment through measures such as addressing customer harassment, and promoting labor-saving and efficiency-enhancing efforts.

## 3. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

3.1 The Conference is invited to note the information contained in this Paper.

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