



International Civil Aviation Organization

WORKING PAPER

AN-Conf/14-WP/108

28/6/24

(Information Paper)

English only

FOURTEENTH AIR NAVIGATION CONFERENCE

Montréal, Canada, 26 August to 6 September 2024

Agenda Item 1: Update on the ICAO 2023-2025 Business Plan and Long-term Strategic Planning 1.1: Reprioritization of the ICAO 2023-2025 Business Plan

ADAPTING LANGUAGE FOR GENDER INCLUSIVITY

(Presented by Canada and co-sponsored by Australia)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper invites the Conference to consider standardizing and adopting more gender-neutral and inclusive language within the aviation system. Many international organizations and civil aviation authorities (CAAs) have committed to creating a more inclusive and gender-neutral environment, however, the specific guidelines may vary between different organizations and States. As the global leader in civil aviation, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) should be at the forefront of implementing strategies for adopting more inclusive language within the aviation system.

Actions: The Conference is invited to:

- a) encourage ICAO and Member States to work together to consider amending the ICAO “Style Guide for Originators” to include gender-neutral and more inclusive language; and
- b) as documents are revised and updated moving forward, encourage ICAO to review and amend existing definitions in ICAO documentation, including in the Annexes, to better reflect more inclusive and gender-neutral language.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The standardization of aviation terminology began over 50 years ago. Given the historical context in which the terminology was created, it reflected the language norms of that time. However, in recent years the realization and acceptance for gender-neutral and more inclusive language has been increasing.

1.2 The Thirteenth Air Navigation Conference in 2018 (AN-Conf/13), recommended that ICAO consider the use of gender-neutral remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS)-related terminology following appropriate research. This Conference is, therefore, encouraged to take this example further and extend this methodology across ICAO documentation more broadly. Other examples of terms that have been replaced in recent years to reflect more inclusive and gender-neutral language include “airman” with “aviator”; cockpit with “flight deck”; and “manmade obstacles” with “structural obstacles”.

1.3 ICAO launched the ICAO Gender Equality Programme in 2017, aligning with the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5: “Achieve gender parity and empower all women and girls”. The programme focuses on four main objectives: building capacity and awareness for gender equality; enhancing female representation in aviation; increasing accountability for

gender equality initiatives; and engaging with external partners. The initiative involves activities specific to ICAO, Member States, government policymakers and the aviation industry. The ICAO Assembly Resolution A41-26: *ICAO Gender Equality Programme* promoting the participation of women in the global aviation sector calls for stronger commitment across all levels, including the Secretariat.

1.4 It is recognized that ICAO and some Member States have already taken actions that promote gender-neutral and inclusive language. Some examples include commitments made at the Global Aviation Gender Summit 2023 included using gender-inclusive language in job advertisements and creating a work environment favourable to gender equality.

1.5 On Women's International Day in 2021, the Declaration on Improving Gender Representation in ICAO's Governing and Technical Bodies, which promotes gender and discriminatory language, was adopted. This declaration commits States to work with ICAO "to ensure that gender discriminatory or biased language in existing ICAO policies or other official documents is identified and removed. The 2023 ICAO Global Aviation Gender Summit, held in Madrid, Spain issued a "Call to Action" with strategies to address gender equality challenges in aviation.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Many States have developed policies on gender-neutral language, recommending avoiding gender-specific terms when gender is not relevant. These policies ensure that State documents, forms, policies, and communication materials are designed to use gender-neutral language, promoting inclusivity and equality, a strategic priority for the aviation sector.

2.2 Industry and international industry organizations have also made commitments to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment in the aviation industry, although specific guidelines and implementation may vary by airline and country.

2.3 It is recognized that using gender neutral and inclusive language support the mitigation of labour shortages by creating and enabling a working environment that is more inclusive to currently lesser represented segments of the population and thus makes aviation an even more attractive industry for skilled individuals.

2.4 Taking these actions demonstrates a commitment to creating a more welcoming and inclusive environment in the aviation industry. However, the specific guidelines may vary between different organizations and countries. For example, different interpretations regarding the term "NOTAM" have been taken in recent years, including moving from "Notice to Airmen" to "Notice to Air Missions" or using "NOTAM" as a term instead of an acronym.

2.5 Changing terminology to be more inclusive and gender-neutral in a piecemeal fashion is not efficient. Inconsistent changes to gender-neutral language can cause confusion and create a difficult-to-navigate language landscape. Effective communication is crucial in aviation, and changes need to be clearly communicated to avoid miscommunication. Training and implementation of new terms require time and resources, and making changes incrementally can lead to repeated efforts.

2.6 Additionally, terminology changes often have regulatory and legal implications, and piecemeal updates can complicate these processes. Every terminology change also necessitates updates to extensive documentation, and doing this one term at a time increases workload and resource requirements significantly. It is, therefore, critical to have these changes done at the ICAO level to help ensure global consistency and broad impact.

3. **CONCLUSION**

3.1 In summary, gender-neutral and inclusive language can make the aviation industry more appealing to a wider range of potential workers, leading to a more diverse and effective workforce, and enhances communication and cooperation among team members while fostering an environment of respect and equality. Further, a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to updating terminology to be more inclusive and gender-neutral is often more efficient and allows for consistent implementation, clear communication, training, and regulatory and documentation updates. Actions for the Conference are included in the Executive Summary.

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