

AGENDA FOR THE SEVENTH WORLDWIDE AIR TRANSPORT CONFERENCE (ATConf/7)

(Montréal, 16 – 20 November 2026)

Theme: *"Air Transport: Powering Global Connectivity, Economic Development and Resilience in a Dynamic World"*

ICAO Strategic Goal: *"The Economic Development of Air Transport Assures the Delivery of Economic Prosperity and Societal Well-Being for All". It fosters development of an economically viable aviation system delivering prosperity for all.*

Strategic importance of Air Transport: *By connecting States to regional and global markets and facilitating travel, tourism, business and trade, air transport generates economic growth and development, provides jobs and fosters other socio-economic benefits. Air Transport is a driver and generator of economic development and growth for States with a direct contribution estimated at USD \$4.1 trillion, equivalent to 3.9 per cent of world gross domestic product (GDP). The direct, indirect and induced contributions are even wider, including providing 86.5 million jobs. Air traffic reached 4.6 billion passengers in 2024, 58 per cent of international tourists and 37 per cent of business travellers travel by air, and the total value of goods transported by air is estimated at USD\$8 trillion, representing 33 per cent of all international trade by value.*

*Air traffic is projected to reach **12.4 billion passengers by 2050**. Optimizing the benefits that are commensurate with this projected growth will require robust regulatory environment, huge investments, and quality infrastructure for improved connectivity, enhanced passenger experience, strengthened resilience, long-term sustainability, and adequate workforce.*

AGENDA ITEM 1: OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF AIR TRANSPORT

1.1 Developments and progress since the Sixth Worldwide Air Transport Conference (ATConf/6)

The Conference will review major developments in the air transport industry and progress in regulatory frameworks since the Sixth Worldwide Air Transport Conference (ATConf/6, 2013). It will examine the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlight key innovations that can improve the passenger's journey and increase supply chain efficiency, air services liberalization progress and best practices, as well as explore how evolving market trends and technologies are shaping global aviation policy and regulation, taking into cognizance ICAO Assembly Resolution A42-26. The Conference will also assess the impacts of these developments on the market and regulatory evolution for passenger, cargo and mail services.

1.2 Air transport in ICAO's long-term strategic plan: Accelerating aviation towards 2050

The Conference will explore and analyze strategic approaches to empower States in accelerating aviation transformation, in line with ICAO's Strategic Plan 2026–2050 and the *No Country Left Behind* (NCLB) Strategic Goal. This agenda item will highlight aviation's contributions to economic development, persistent capacity and connectivity gaps, emerging opportunities from both demand

recovery and technological advancements, as well as risks related to structural imbalances, cost pressures, lack of adequate workforce, labour and social considerations and unequal connectivity growth.

Particular attention will be given to the circumstances and needs of developing States, with a special focus on Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), recognizing their structural dependence on air transport for connectivity, trade, tourism, and socio-economic development.

AGENDA ITEM 2: FOSTERING AVIATION GROWTH AND AIR CONNECTIVITY THROUGH INVESTMENTS IN INFRASTRUCTURE, HUMAN CAPITAL AND PARTNERSHIPS

2.1 Integrating civil aviation into national development and investment plans

The Conference will examine the inclusion of aviation projects in national development and investment plans, reinforcing aviation's role in broader economic strategies of States. Discussions will focus on improving policy alignment including approaches that more effectively accommodate supply chain dynamics and other specialized needs, project prioritization and cross-government coordination to support connectivity, socio-economic development, and sustainable investment across the aviation value chain.

The Conference will also offer the opportunity to support the work of ICAO in promoting the economic development of air transport and its relevant decisions and Resolutions on the matter.

2.2 Investment for the development and modernization of civil aviation infrastructure

This agenda item will provide a platform for States to discuss and agree on pragmatic measures to support the development and modernization of physical and digital aviation infrastructure, the improvement of air connectivity, capacity-building and required workforce, including targeted initiatives to advance women's empowerment and the Next Generation of Aviation Professionals (NGAP).

In this context, the Conference will examine approaches to fostering a transparent, stable and predictable investment climate, including through multi-stakeholder engagement, diversification of funding sources and the enhanced participation of the private sector. Financing needs and opportunities arising from advanced and emerging aviation operations, including advanced air mobility (AAM), artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled systems and new operating environments will be identified. Discussions, in collaboration with multilateral financial institutions, will cover scalable blended financing, private investment, business and regulatory reforms, public-private partnerships and incentive schemes, with a view to supporting sustainable aviation development.

It will also provide opportunity to focus on ICAO's role in economic development of air transport and in supporting States with infrastructure project identification, preparation and prioritization, with the aim to delivering 2050 projections for passenger and cargo.

AGENDA ITEM 3: STRENGTHENING REGULATORY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

3.1 Strengthening regulatory oversight and evolving institutional frameworks

This agenda item will identify priority issues including capacity-building and technical assistance needs, particularly for LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and other developing States to enhance implementation and compliance with the *Convention on International Civil Aviation* (Chicago Convention) and ICAO economic policies, showcasing ICAOs leadership role in the economic development of air transport including strengthening human capital development strategies (NGAP) as essential pillars of sustainable regulatory oversight.

Discussions will also consider evolving models for funding civil aviation authorities and aviation regulators, ranging from full reliance on government budgets to the creation of operationally and financially autonomous regulatory entities. The agenda item will provide a platform for States to share experiences, challenges, and good practices, with a view to enhancing effective, transparent, and sustainable regulatory oversight.

3.2 Enhancing air connectivity through progressive economic and regulatory aviation frameworks for international air transport

The Conference will underscore the central role of air connectivity as a driver of socio-economic development, trade, tourism, regional integration and resilience. It will emphasize that the full benefits of air transport are enabled by key economic policies fostering connectivity, growth and affordability. The Conference will also explore the update of existing frameworks using data-driven methodologies including the use of ICAO Global Aviation Competitiveness Index and Aviation Satellite Account.

Recalling the Assembly Resolution 42-26, and in particular its Appendix A - *Economic regulation of international air transport*, this agenda item will examine the ongoing work on core regulatory areas supporting connectivity and growth, including market access and liberalization, market concentration and fair competition, while recognizing the different models and needs of passenger and cargo markets.

3.3 Strengthening emergency planning mechanism and consumer protection for a resilient aviation system

Recent large-scale disruptions, notably the COVID-19 global pandemic, highlighted gaps in States' preparedness, in particular assistance to passengers during massive airline/airport emergency situations. This topic will address the need to review and strengthen aviation emergency planning alongside existing consumer protection regimes, taking into account current commercial trends and the potential for future crises. It will also provide an opportunity for States to share national experiences on consumer protection in aviation and highlight the role of ICAO in strengthening emergency planning and consumer protection frameworks.

The Conference will also highlight the importance of ensuring effective assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families in accordance with the *Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules for International Carriage by Air* (Montreal Convention 1999).

3.4 Levies on international air transport

This agenda item will consider States' implementation of relevant provisions of the Chicago Convention and ICAO's policies and guidance on user charges and taxation and recall the Assembly Resolution A42-26 (Appendix B and C) on the matter. In recent years, various forms of levies, both aviation-related and non-aviation-related, have been introduced or expanded, prompting consideration of their potential impact on the development of international air transport.

The discussions will also consider the possible development of appropriate policies and mechanisms by ICAO for the cost recovery on airport and air navigation services provided to the operations of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) and new entrants.

AGENDA ITEM 4: EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES, NEW BUSINESS MODELS AND OTHER ASSOCIATED ASPECTS

4.1 Economic regulatory frameworks on emerging technologies

This discussion will explore how emerging technologies are reshaping the aviation landscape. Focus areas include AAM, AI, suborbital and commercial space transport and the broader digital transformation of the sector. Consideration will be given to the economic regulatory implications of these trends and the economic integration of these new entrants into existing regulatory frameworks.

4.2 Support and economic opportunities of access to aviation cleaner energies

This session will discuss opportunities and challenges to support the implementation of ICAO's medium and long-term aspirational goals and vision, including the investment through incentivizing private sector participation and engagement by financial institutions and other United Nations (UN) agencies and international organizations, in line with the ICAO Global Framework on Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), Lower Carbon Aviation Fuels (LCAF) and other aviation cleaner energies, without prejudice to relevant Assembly Resolutions A42-21 and A42-22 being addressed by other ICAO fora and the outcomes of the ICAO Conferences on Aviation and Alternative Fuels.

Deliberations will address the economic and investment potential of aviation cleaner energies in the air transport sector, in particular for developing countries and States with special needs, their financing implications and investment opportunities and will also cover the need for operational resilience in infrastructure planning, with a view to shaping economic regulatory frameworks that fosters innovation, environmental sustainability, and equitable access to air transport.

4.3 Leveraging air transport data and the digital ecosystem for seamless, secure and resilient operations

The Conference will focus on how digitalization, AI and data-driven technologies can support seamless, secure and resilient aviation operations, and on the need to expand the systematic collection, harmonization, and integration of official air transport statistics and big data sources including air traffic, flight tracking and market intelligence data, to support predictive analytics, AI-enabled modelling, operational resilience, and strategic connectivity planning. Emphasis will be placed on building interoperable, accessible and timely air-transport-specific data ecosystems that strengthen oversight, operational continuity, cybersecurity and informed decision-making across the aviation system.

Within this digital transformation context, the Conference will also consider how improved air transport data and analytics can guide infrastructure planning and investment, helping ensure resilient, efficient and future-ready passenger and cargo transport.

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