



WORKING PAPER

**SEVENTH WORLDWIDE AIR TRANSPORT CONFERENCE
(ATCONF/7)**

Montréal, HQ, 16 to 20 November 2026

Agenda Item 1: Overview of developments in the field of air transport

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

ADVANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT FOR A SUSTAINABLE AVIATION WORKFORCE

(Presented by Oman, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA), the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations (IFATCA) and the International Labour Organization (ILO))

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women face significant challenges in representation, retention and professionalisation across many aviation occupations and leadership roles. As the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) implements its Strategic Plan 2026–2050, increasing women's participation is both an equality objective and part of the human-capital investment needed for sustainable growth, connectivity and achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

ICAO has established a strong foundation through Assembly Resolution A41-26, its Global Aviation Gender Summits, expanded gender-disaggregated data, the Landmark Study on Women in Global Aviation and the forthcoming Mainstreaming Women's Participation and Advancement in Aviation Toolkit. The 2026 Summit reinforced the need to move from commitment to measurable action.

The next step is to translate this work into improvements across the employment cycle and across licensed and non-licensed occupations, addressing not only attraction and recruitment but also retention, gender responsive workplace and employment conditions, career development, equality of opportunity and participation in decision-making.

Action: The Conference is invited to:

- a) reaffirm that advancing gender equality and women's participation across the aviation workforce is an important enabler of workforce sustainability, inclusive growth, the achievement of ICAO's Strategic Plan 2026–2050 and the United Nations SDGs;
- b) recognise attraction, retention and development are complementary and mutually reinforcing factors affecting women's participation and empowerment in the industry and therefore prioritisation and resourcing should address all three factors;
- c) encourage Member States and industry to address barriers affecting women throughout the employment cycle, including attraction, recruitment, retention, career development, progression and leadership, across licensed and non-licensed aviation occupations;

¹ English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish versions provided by ITF.

d) support the ICAO Landmark Study on Women in Global Aviation and encourage ICAO to translate its findings and recommendations, once finalized, into practical guidance, measurable actions and appropriate indicators; and e) request that implementation of ICAO initiatives arising from the Landmark Study and related gender-equality work include meaningful engagement with women aviation workers and their representative organizations, alongside States, industry, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and other relevant partners.	
<i>Strategic Goal:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Goal: <i>The Economic Development of Air Transport Assures the Delivery of Economic Prosperity and Societal Well-Being for All</i> ; and the High-Priority Enabler: Gender Equality and Attracting New Talent to Aviation.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	The activities referred to in this paper should, where possible, be advanced through existing ICAO programmes, partnerships and resources. Any additional implementation would be subject to availability of resources.
<i>References:</i>	ICAO Strategic Plan 2026–2050; Assembly Resolution A41-26; ICAO Gender Equality Programme; ICAO, 2023 Gender Equality Survey; A42-WP/20, Progress Report on the Implementation of the ICAO Gender Equality Programme; Report on A42 Agenda Item 38 (A42-WP/641); ICAO Global Aviation Gender Summit 2023; ICAO Global Aviation Gender Summit 2026; ICAO Landmark Study on Women in Global Aviation; ILO, Conclusions and Recommendations for the civil aviation sector (2023); ILO Working Paper 117, Women and aviation: Quality jobs, attraction and retention (2024).

1. BACKGROUND AND ANTECEDENTS ON LABOUR AND SOCIAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 The International Civil Aviation Organization’s (ICAO) Strategic Plan 2026–2050 identifies “Gender Equality and Attracting New Talent to Aviation” as a High-Priority Enabler, reflecting aviation’s long-term need to attract, develop and retain a skilled and diverse workforce.

1.2 Women remain significantly underrepresented. ICAO’s 2023 Gender Equality Survey, based on 2021 licensed-personnel data, found women accounted for 4.0 per cent of pilots, 3.0 per cent of aircraft maintenance engineers and technicians, and 20.6 per cent of air traffic controllers globally. These figures do not capture the wider aviation workforce.

1.3 Removing structural barriers to women’s entry, retention and advancement is therefore both an equality objective and a workforce-sustainability imperative.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 **Building on ICAO’s Gender Equality Commitments** - ICAO has developed a substantial foundation for action. Assembly Resolution A41-26 strengthened the ICAO Gender Equality Programme and called for stronger commitment to women’s participation in global aviation. ICAO has since expanded its work on gender-disaggregated data, partnerships, capacity-building and accountability.² The 2023 Global Aviation Gender Summit identified the need to attract, retain and train women at all levels and to ensure that gender is recognized in air transport policies and planning, particularly from a workforce

²ICAO, Assembly Resolution A41-26, ICAO Gender Equality Programme promoting the participation of women in the global aviation sector; see also ICAO, Gender Equality and ICAO.[[ICAO Gender Equality Programme](#)]

perspective. The 2026 Summit moved the discussion further towards measurable and sustainable action, with practical attention to women's participation, retention and leadership.³

2.2 The 42nd Assembly reinforced data-driven action, including expanded sex-disaggregated data and mainstreaming women's issues in relevant plans, strategies and workforce planning.

2.3 Together, these developments provide a basis for translating commitments and evidence into practical workforce improvements.

2.4 **From attraction to Sustainable Aviation** - Attraction and recruitment are essential, but they are not sufficient. The conclusions and recommendations of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Technical Meeting on a Green, Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Recovery for the Civil Aviation Sector, held in Geneva, 24–28 April 2023 committed the sector to addressing gender imbalances throughout the employment cycle, including recruitment, development opportunities and wage gaps⁴.

2.5 ILO research on women in aviation similarly examines gender equality through the career cycle and the quality and sustainability of aviation employment.⁵ Key issues identified as affecting retention of women workers includes violence and harassment, wage disparities and access to premium wage rates, work- life balance, career interruptions and access to personal development.

2.6 Preliminary Landmark Study findings presented at the 2026 Global Aviation Gender Summit reinforce the need to address retention and progression. Fifty-six per cent of respondents did not believe women receive the same respect as men in aviation. Factors influencing decisions to leave included pay (47 per cent), inadequate work-life balance (40 per cent), lack of progression opportunities (31 per cent), workplace culture (27 per cent) and lack of professional development (26 per cent).

2.7 These reports highlight complementary and overlapping factors that significantly impact the retention of women in the industry's workforce. Retention and attraction are mutually reinforcing, consequently addressing challenges with retention will also improve impact of measure targeting attraction. Policy must also extend beyond licensed professions to women in cabin services, airports, ground handling, catering and other operational and support roles.

2.8 Targeted intervention, alongside cooperation with the ILO through the renewal of ICAO-ILO Agreement, would complement ICAO's High Priority Enabler on 'Gender Equality and Attracting New Talent to Aviation'.

2.9 **Using the Landmark Study to move from evidence to action** - ICAO's Landmark Study on Women in Global Aviation represents an important opportunity to strengthen the evidence base. The Study is designed to benchmark representation, map existing policies, explore women's lived experiences and develop evidence-based recommendations across roles, ranks and regions. Preliminary findings presented at the 2026 Global Aviation Gender Summit highlighted a range of structural and workplace barriers affecting women's participation, retention and advancement in aviation. The preliminary recommendations also point towards the importance of addressing systemic barriers through institutional, policy and, where appropriate, regulatory reform. This represents an important progression from approaches

³ICAO, Global Aviation Gender Summit 2023; ICAO, Global Aviation Gender Summit 2026, Summit outcomes, 24 July 2026. [\[2023 Summit\]](#) [\[2026 Summit\]](#)

⁴ [Conclusions and recommendations on the promotion of decent work to shape a green, sustainable and inclusive economic recovery for the civil aviation sector \(TMGCAS/2023/9\)](#)

⁵ILO, Conclusions and Recommendations on the promotion of decent work to shape a green, sustainable and inclusive economic recovery for the civil aviation sector, 2023; ILO Working Paper 117, Women and aviation: Quality jobs, attraction and retention, 2024. [\[ILO 2023 Conclusions and Recommendations\]](#) [\[ILO Working Paper 117\]](#)

focused primarily on attracting women into aviation towards addressing the structures and workplace conditions that can affect their ability to remain, develop and advance.

2.10 Spanning more than 140 countries, the Study broadens ICAO's evidence beyond licensed professions and is complemented by expanded gender-disaggregated data and the forthcoming Mainstreaming Women's Participation and Advancement Toolkit.

2.11 Once finalized, findings should inform practical guidance, measurable actions and indicators covering representation, retention, development and progression into leadership and decision-making roles.

2.12 Women aviation workers and their representative organizations should be meaningfully engaged so that measures reflect workplace realities and are practical and effective.

2.13 ICAO should continue working with Member States, industry, the ILO and other partners, with women aviation workers and their representative organizations included in developing and implementing resulting measures.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 ICAO now has the policy, data and institutional foundations to accelerate progress on women's participation in the aviation workforce.

3.2 The next phase should ensure that attraction is matched by the conditions and opportunities that enable women to remain in the industry, develop and advance their careers.

3.3 Turning ICAO's evidence into measurable action, informed by women workers and their representative organizations, will strengthen equality and the sustainable workforce aviation needs.

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