



WORKING PAPER

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

Montréal, HQ, 16 to 20 November 2026

Agenda Item 3: Strengthening regulatory and institutional frameworks

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

**TEMPLATE “SOCIAL AND LABOUR ASPECTS” ARTICLE
NECESSARY IN NEW TASA TO ADVANCE A SOCIALLY
SUSTAINABLE LIBERALIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL AIR
TRANSPORT**

(Presented by the United Nations - International Labour Organization (ILO),
International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF), International Federation of
Air Line Pilots’ Associations (IFALPA))

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Labour and social safeguards cannot be separated and are interrelated to the gradual, orderly and sustainable liberalization of international air transport. Following the Conclusions and Recommendations adopted by previous Worldwide Air Transport Conferences, some Member States and regional bodies have included a “labour and social” article in recent air services agreements (ASAs). This gives credence to the principle that the labour and social sustainability of the sector is a strategically vital piece that should be considered together with liberalization, investment and connectivity efforts.

Actually, any growth, connectivity and expansion strategy solely focused on the granting of “full market access” and “fully flexible market access provisions” in ASAs could lead to an out-of-control situation resulting exactly in the opposite of what it purports. Such a structural change in terms of market access, ownership, operations and the consolidation, and adoption of new airline business models and practices (including changes in the ownership and control) would have an impact on employment and labour protection, and represent a challenge for the efficiency, safety, social sustainability, regulatory oversight and enforcement of the aviation sector.

Action: The Conference is invited to

- a) request Member States to recall, reaffirm and build upon the labour and social principles and recommendations adopted by the previous Worldwide Air Transport Conferences and the International Labour Organization (ILO) 2023 Conclusions and Recommendations for the aviation sector;
- b) commend the Air Transport Regulation Panel’s (ATRP) work on the further development of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Template Air Services Agreement (TASA), and urge the Panel to include an optional “labour and social aspects” article as part of its TASA update; and

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

c) encourage Member States to decisively pursue legal and institutional arrangements and a progressive harmonization of regulatory frameworks that weave decent work protections, in particular those aligned with the ILO’s Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.	
<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>
<i>Financial implications:</i>	None.
<i>References:</i>	ATConf/7-WP/5, <i>Optimizing air connectivity through enhanced economic regulatory frameworks</i> , 2026. Austria ASA article template EU-Qatar ASA EU-ASEAN ASA ILO, Conclusions and Recommendations on the promotion of decent work to shape a green, sustainable and inclusive economic recovery for the civil aviation sector, 2023. ATConf/6: Report (Doc 10009), 2013. ICAO, Secretariat Study on the Safety and Security Aspects of Economic Liberalization, State letter EC 2/93, AN 11/41-05/83, 12 August 2005. ATConf/5: Report (Doc 9819), 2003. ATConf/4: Report (Doc 9644), 1994.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the United Nations regulatory agency overseeing the ‘world of work’. The unique tripartite structure of the ILO gives an equal voice to workers, employers (industry) and 187 Member States to ensure that their views are closely reflected in setting labour standards and shaping policies and programmes. In 2023, the ILO convened a Technical meeting on a green, sustainable and inclusive economic recovery for the civil aviation sector. The meeting adopted Conclusions and Recommendations, including the following paragraph 7:

“Structural change in terms of ownership, operations and the consolidation, and adoption of new business models and practices (including ownership and control in countries other than the State of registry) constitutes features of the industry that could have an impact on employment and labour protection and may represent a challenge for regulatory oversight and enforcement. Dealing with these specificities of the sector in a coherent manner, in the policy, regulatory and practice spheres, can advance decent work in the sector and overcome safety and health, and inspection challenges.”

1.2 The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has been at the heart of international aviation safety for 80 years, working with 193 Member States to build the standards, tools, and partnerships that keep billions of passengers safe each year. Previous ICAO Worldwide Air Transport Conferences have adopted conclusions and recommendations, including the following principles:

- a. *“that any change in in approach to international air transport regulation should have due regard to the objective participation and to the interests of all stakeholders in international air transport, including air carriers [...], airports, distribution intermediaries and labour.”*²

² Doc 9644 ATConf/4, Recommendation para. 4.1, sub-para. 1(g)(7). *Also see:* Conclusions in sub-paras. 2.2.5.1 and 2.2.6.1.

- b. *“liberalization may have various implications for labour, which should continue to participate as an important stakeholder for the development of the air transport industry. States should observe and respect the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and take the necessary measures to promote social dialogue with the active participation of labour as a way to find innovative and socially responsible solutions.”*³
- c. *“liberalization is a means and process, not an end. The objective of regulatory evolution is to create a favourable environment in which international air transport may develop and flourish in an orderly, efficient, economical and sustainable manner, without compromising safety and security, while respecting social and labour standards.”*⁴

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 In accordance with its Terms of Reference, and since the Sixth Worldwide Air Transport Conference (ATConf/6), the Air Transport Regulation Panel (ATRP) has carried out commendable efforts to assist ICAO’s work while taking into account the views of Member States and stakeholders. The ATRP has conducted exhaustive work over more than a decade to provide Member States a basis for further liberalization and development.

2.2 More recently, ATRP has now pursued optional revisions to the existing Template Air Service Agreement (TASA) as a tool for Member States and air service negotiators to use at their discretion to further develop air transport. Currently, the possible inclusion of an optional labour/social matters template article to the TASA is being considered by one of ATRP’s working groups. This is a very powerful development. If completed, such template clause could support ICAO’s principles of encouraging the evolution of air transport in an orderly, efficient, economical manner, while respecting social and labour standards.

2.3 To the ILO’s knowledge, a number of labour and social matters clauses have been included in recent air services agreements (ASAs). Austria’s model template clause, and the European Union’s ASAs with Qatar and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have also included such provisions. Some of these include as a basis the following concepts:

- That ASAs have an impact on labour, employment and working conditions.
- Acceptance of the principles of internationally recognized standards in the international conventions.
- Encouraging and calling for high labour standards.
- A mention that all *“ILO Member States have the duty to adopt, implement and effectively enforce national laws and regulations to ensure that fundamental principles and rights at work and ratified international labour Conventions protect and are*

³ Doc 9819 ATConf/5, Conclusion 1.1.3.1(f).

⁴ Doc 10009, ATConf/6 Conclusion 2.1.3.1 (b).

*applied to all workers in the civil aviation sector, taking into account their obligations under other international labour standards”.*⁵

2.4 Working Paper 5 (ATConf/7-WP/5) seems to suggest a highly entropic approach to solve decades of intractable economic regulatory challenges. Its “practical implementation-focused pathways for States to optimize air connectivity through market access liberalization” particularly highlight the granting of “full market access” and “fully flexible market access provisions” in ASAs. But, ICAO has also underlined the “need for States to fulfil primary regulatory oversight responsibilities for aviation safety and security, regardless of any change in economic regulatory arrangements”.⁶

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The growth and expansion of the aviation sector needs to evolve and be done better than before – it needs to lift the sector to new heights, in particular in terms of social sustainability. In order to combat skills shortages and attract and encourage workers to remain in the industry, career prospects and terms and conditions of work should be competitive and promote decent work. Ensuring decent work is paramount to attract and retain low- and high-skilled workers, and preserve jobs, while recognizing the particularities of the sector.

3.2 The Conference can encourage ATRP members and stakeholders to move quickly and do what is necessary to ensure the inclusion of an optional social and labour template article for ASAs. This would support national strategies to increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of the aviation sector to benefit Member States, connectivity, investments, airlines and workers.

— END —

⁵ ILO, Conclusions and Recommendations on the promotion of decent work to shape a green, sustainable and inclusive economic recovery for the civil aviation sector, para. 7.

⁶ ICAO, Study on the safety and security aspects of economic liberalization, 2005.