



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

FACILITATING AIR TRANSPORT LIBERALISATION

(Presented by the United Arab Emirates)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) strongly supports open and progressively liberalised international air transport markets. Air Services Agreements (ASAs) provide the framework through which States establish international air services and enhance market access for their airlines.

States have different economic circumstances, aviation policies, legal frameworks and approaches to international air transport. These differences should continue to be recognised in the conduct of international air transport relations.

National, bilateral and regional mechanisms may already address matters arising from the operation of international air services. These existing mechanisms should be taken into account when States consider whether introduction of further provisions are appropriate in a particular air transport relationship.

This paper calls for an approach that supports further liberalisation while preserving the flexibility of States to negotiate air services arrangements appropriate to their circumstances.

Action: The Conference is invited to:

- reaffirm the importance of liberalisation of international air transport and continued efforts to expand market access, global connectivity and consumer choice;
- recognise that national or regional regulatory approaches, or any treaty provisions that are discussed outside the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) framework may not necessarily be suitable as a globally applicable international baseline for bilateral air services arrangements; and
- reaffirm that States should retain flexibility and choice in determining the provisions appropriate to their bilateral air transport relationships, and in the use of ICAO model provisions and guidance materials.

<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>	Nil
<i>References:</i>	Doc 9587, <i>Policy and Guidance Material on the Economic Regulation of International Air Transport</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The progressive liberalisation of international air transport has contributed to greater global connectivity, competition and consumer choice, while providing airlines with greater flexibility to respond to market demand.

1.2 The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has consistently supported open and liberal international air transport markets based on fair and equal opportunities for airlines to operate and compete.

1.3 Differences among States in their economic circumstances, regulatory frameworks, aviation policies and airline business models continue to exist.

1.4 A common objective should remain the provision of efficient air services offering greater connectivity, choice and value to consumers and shippers.

2. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

2.1 Since the Sixth Worldwide Air Transport Conference (ATConf/6) in 2013, different approaches have continued to be reflected in national and regional legislation and in individual air services arrangements.

2.2 The inclusion of particular provisions in individual bilateral or regional arrangements reflects the circumstances and policies of the parties concerned and does not, in itself, establish a globally applicable approach.

2.3 States should continue to determine, by mutual agreement, the provisions appropriate to their bilateral air transport relationships.

3. ICAO FRAMEWORK

3.1 The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) already provides policy and guidance material to assist States in the liberalisation and economic regulation of international air transport, including the ICAO Template Air Services Agreements (TASA).

3.2 The TASA provides different options that States may consider according to the circumstances of their air transport relationships.

3.3 ICAO guidance should continue to preserve flexibility and choice for States and retain its neutral and non-binding character.

3.4 Model provisions should assist States in their negotiations without predetermining the outcome of their bilateral discussions.

3.5 ICAO model provisions should not assume that an approach developed within a particular national or regional framework is generally appropriate for all States.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Liberalisation of international air transport has developed through bilateral, regional and multilateral arrangements, reflecting different circumstances and levels of market opening. Flexibility has been an important element of that process.

4.2 States should remain free to determine by mutual agreement the provisions appropriate to their particular bilateral air transport relationship.

4.3 Where mechanisms already exist under national or regional law, or under an existing bilateral arrangement, their relevance should be taken into account before further provisions are considered.

4.4 Compliance with applicable national or regional law should be distinguished from the incorporation of particular regulatory requirements into the rights and obligations mutually agreed between States under an Air Services Agreement (ASA).

4.5 In this context, national or regional regulatory approaches or any treaty provisions that are developed outside the ICAO framework should not determine the content of ICAO model provision or shape a bilateral air transport relationship.

4.6 Regulatory developments should not be used to undermine, reinterpret or diminish rights previously agreed under existing ASAs, nor delay, condition, restrict or reverse market access opportunities.

4.7 The liberalisation of market access should remain the principal objective of international air transport policy. Provisions in ASAs should be proportionate, transparent, non-discriminatory, and consistent with this principal objective.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The UAE remains fully committed to liberal international air transport markets, and fair and equal opportunities for airlines to operate and compete.

5.2 Existing mechanisms should be taken into account, while States retain flexibility to determine by mutual agreement the terms of their bilateral air transport relationships.

5.3 ICAO should continue to focus on facilitating the liberalisation of international air transport, including greater market access and connectivity, while preserving the choice available to States in the use of ICAO policy and guidance material.

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