International Civil Aviation Organization

**WORKING PAPER**

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# SEVENTH WORLDWIDE AIR TRANSPORT CONFERENCE (ATCONF/7)

**Montréal, HQ, 16 to 20 November 2026**

**Agenda Item 2: Fostering aviation growth and air connectivity through investments in infrastructure, human capital and partnerships**
**2.2: Investment for the development and modernization of civil aviation infrastructure**

## A GLOBAL COMPACT ON THE AVIATION WORKFORCE PIPELINE

(Presented by Kazakhstan)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The sustained growth of air transport depends on an adequate supply of qualified personnel: safety inspectors, airworthiness engineers, air traffic controllers, licensed pilots and other specialists. Many States, and emerging authorities in particular, face persistent shortages and the loss of trained staff to larger employers. This paper proposes a coordinated, voluntary global approach to training, retention and managed mobility, so that workforce capacity is planned, financed and protected as a component of civil aviation infrastructure investment rather than treated as each State's separate problem.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Investment in civil aviation infrastructure delivers its full value only when matched by investment in the people who operate, maintain and oversee it. This agenda item names human capital alongside physical infrastructure for that reason, and the resilience sought by this Conference depends first on people.

1.2 Across regions, authorities and industry report difficulty attracting and retaining safety inspectors, airworthiness engineers, air traffic controllers, licensed pilots and other specialists. For emerging authorities, the problem is sharper: staff trained at public expense are frequently drawn to larger operators or authorities, leaving oversight capacity depleted. The global shortage of qualified oversight personnel was brought before the 42nd Session of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Assembly; this paper carries that concern into the economic and investment context of this Conference.

## 2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Workforce shortages are a system risk, not only a national one. A State unable to staff its oversight functions weakens confidence in the network as a whole, because both safety and economic regulation depend on every State being able to discharge its responsibilities.

2.2 Three elements would form the core of a coordinated response: training capacity, through expanding accredited and affordable training and the recognition of qualifications across States; retention, through helping authorities offer credible career paths; and managed mobility, through orderly arrangements so that the movement of skilled staff between States and operators does not leave any authority unable to function.

2.3 ICAO already maintains relevant instruments: the competency framework for civil aviation safety inspectors in the Manual on the Competencies of Civil Aviation Safety Inspectors (Doc 10070), the guidance on establishing and managing a State safety oversight system in Safety Oversight Manual (Doc 9734), the Next Generation of Aviation Professionals (NGAP) Strategy and its training activities. A compact would connect these into a coherent pipeline rather than a set of separate initiatives.

2.4 Because the workforce is infrastructure, it belongs in the investment planning covered by this agenda item. Development partners and financing institutions that fund airports and air navigation systems could be encouraged to include, as a matter of course, the training and retention of the oversight and operational personnel those assets require.

2.5 The approach should be voluntary, should respect national labor arrangements, and should not prescribe employment terms. Its purpose is coordination and capacity, not regulation of the labor market.

## 3. CONCLUSION

3.1 A qualified workforce is critical infrastructure for the aviation system and warrants the same planning attention and financing as physical assets.

3.2 A voluntary global compact on training, retention and managed mobility would reduce a shared risk and support the growth and resilience objectives of this Conference.

3.3 The Conference is invited to note the information contained in this paper.

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