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SEVENTH WORLDWIDE AIR TRANSPORT CONFERENCE (ATCONF/7)

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Agenda Item 3: Strengthening regulatory and institutional frameworks
3.2: Enhancing air connectivity through progressive economic and regulatory aviation frameworks for international air transport

ALIGNING AIR CARGO WITH MULTIMODAL TRADE CORRIDORS

(Presented by Kazakhstan)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Air cargo is planned and regulated largely in isolation from the surface freight networks it connects with. As supply chains are rebuilt for resilience, the value of air cargo increasingly depends on how well it integrates with road, rail and maritime links within multimodal corridors. This paper proposes that the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) develop advisory model principles to help States align national air-cargo policy with multimodal freight planning, so that connectivity and supply-chain resilience are treated as one system, with ICAO's contribution positioned at the aviation interface.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Air cargo carries a small share of world trade by volume but a large share by value, and it is central to time-sensitive and high-value supply chains. Its contribution is maximized where it connects smoothly with surface transport, and the resilience sought by this Conference depends on that connection.

1.2 In practice, air-cargo policy, covering traffic rights, ground handling, customs and airport capacity, is often developed separately from the planning of road, rail and maritime freight, even though goods move across all of them within a single corridor.

1.3 For landlocked and transit States the question is immediate. Kazakhstan sits on the land corridors linking Asia and Europe, and its air-cargo capacity is most valuable where it complements those corridors rather than standing apart from them.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Multimodal freight corridors, in which air links complement surface transport rather than compete with it, add resilience. When one mode is disrupted, integrated planning makes it easier to reroute goods and maintain supply.

2.2 Several barriers sit at the seams between modes: inconsistent customs and documentation requirements, limited data sharing between transport authorities, the absence of shared performance indicators across modes, and airport surface-access and handling constraints that were not planned with corridor flows in mind.

2.3 The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) can contribute model principles that help States treat air cargo as part of national multimodal freight strategy, align facilitation and customs practices with the wider corridor, and coordinate infrastructure and slot planning with surface-transport authorities. This builds on the facilitation provisions of Annex 9 - *Facilitation* and on ICAO's policy guidance on air cargo in air services agreements.

2.4 The principles could cover: the place of air cargo within national freight and logistics strategies; alignment of customs and facilitation practice across modes at corridor level; data-sharing arrangements between transport and border authorities; and coordination of airport surface access, handling capacity and slot planning with rail and road operators.

2.5 The principles would be advisory and would respect the mandates of other bodies responsible for surface transport and trade facilitation, positioning ICAO's contribution at the aviation interface.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The economic value and resilience of air cargo depend increasingly on its integration with surface freight in multimodal corridors.

3.2 Model principles from ICAO would help States plan air cargo as part of a wider freight system and reduce the frictions that arise at the boundaries between modes.

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

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