



WORKING PAPER

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

Montréal, HQ, 16 to 20 November 2026

Agenda Item 3: Strengthening regulatory and institutional frameworks

3.3: Strengthening emergency planning mechanism and consumer protection for a resilient aviation system

ACCESSIBILITY IN AIR TRANSPORT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

(Presented by Uruguay and supported by 20 LACAC Member States²)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This working paper discusses accessibility in air transport for persons with disabilities, considering its significance for connectivity, facilitation, and passenger service quality. It also presents general background information, applicable legal framework and proposals aimed at promoting the conduct of studies to establish baselines, strengthen adoption of coordinated and participatory measures, and identify and gradually eliminate barriers across the entire travel journey.

Action: The Conference is invited to:

- a) encourage States to strengthen the implementation of international and regional instruments on the rights of persons with disabilities, including the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and its Optional Protocol.
- b) promote the adoption of accessibility policies, procedures, and measures across the entire air transport chain, including accessible information, adequate infrastructure, timely assistance, staff training and harmonized procedures;
- c) foster the participation of persons with disabilities and their organizations in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and measures related to accessibility in air transport;
- d) support the conduct of studies and the collection of data serving to establish baselines, identify barriers and guide decision making by States, airport operators, air operators and other interested parties;
- e) request that the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) develop practical tools or checklists enabling States and the industry to assess the level of accessibility in airports and air transport services.

<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This working paper relates to the Strategic Goals: <i>The Economic Development of Air Transport Assures the Delivery of Economic Prosperity and Societal Well-Being for All; and Aviation Delivers Seamless, Accessible, and Reliable Mobility for All.</i>
<i>Financial implications:</i>	N/A

¹ Spanish version provided by Uruguay.

² Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

References:	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol ICAO Annex 9 – <i>Facilitation</i> to the 1944 <i>Convention on International Civil Aviation</i> (Chicago Convention) Manual for Air Transport of Passengers with Disabilities (LACAC)
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Disability is a dynamic and evolving concept, resulting from the interaction between persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, or psychosocial impairments and the environmental barriers that may impair their full, effective and equal participation in society.

1.2 Despite the advances achieved through international instruments, public policies and awareness activities, persons with disabilities continue to face barriers limiting their effective access to different areas of social and economic life, including air transport. In this sector, such barriers may take the form of difficulties in accessing information, poorly adapted airport infrastructure, non-harmonized procedures, lack of adequate assistance, or absence of conditions ensuring a safe, dignified, and predictable travel experience.

1.3 The lengthening of life expectancy and demographic changes make it increasingly likely that, at some point in life, individuals will experience a temporary or permanent condition limitation of their mobility, communication, autonomy or ability to interact with their surroundings. Accessibility should therefore be understood not only as a measure aimed at a specific group, but as a prerequisite for a more inclusive, efficient, and people-centred air transport system.

1.4 In this context, the promotion of full and effective participation by persons with disabilities should be a relevant goal for regional and global civil aviation. This requires planning, coordination between civil aviation authorities, airports, air operators and other stakeholders, and progressive policies to reduce inequalities, eliminate barriers and ensure adequate accessibility in air transport.

2. ACCESSIBILITY IN AIR TRANSPORT AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 The scale of disability worldwide has direct consequences for air transport. According to World Health Organization and World Bank estimates, some 1,300 million people, or 16 per cent of the world population (that is, one in every six persons) have a significant disability. Accessibility should therefore be considered as a structural dimension of air connectivity, facilitation and passenger service quality.

2.2 In practice, persons with disabilities may encounter barriers at different stages of the travel journey, such as accessing information or buying tickets, moving around in the airport, going through security checks, boarding, the journey on board, disembarking, retrieving baggage and dealing with claim services. These barriers may reduce passenger autonomy, generate uncertainty and limit the effective exercise of a person's right to equality of access to transport.

2.3 From the legal standpoint, the rights of persons with disabilities are recognized in various international and regional instruments, notably the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, adopted in New York in 2006; Annex 9 – *Facilitation* to the *Convention on International Civil Aviation* (Chicago Convention); the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) guidance documents; and the Latin American Civil Aviation Commission's (LACAC) Manual on Air

Transport of Passengers with Disabilities. In Uruguay, its Laws No.18418 of November 2008, No. 18651 of February 2010 and No. 18776, of August 2011 are relevant instruments that incorporate the provisions of the above international standards into our domestic legislation.

2.4 This legal framework argues that accessibility in air transport should not be understood solely as a voluntary practice or a customer service measure, but as an obligation to ensure non-discrimination, equality of opportunity and the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities. Consequently, States, airports, air operators and other stakeholders should work on identifying and gradually eliminating barriers by means of harmonized procedures, adequate infrastructure, accessible information, staff training and mechanisms for consultation with persons with disabilities and the organizations that represent them.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 Accessibility in air transport is a necessary condition to ensure the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities on an equal footing. This is an essential component of air connectivity, facilitation and service quality.

3.2 The scale of disability worldwide, along with aging and other social, health and demographic factors, require that States and the aviation industry adopt a coordinated and collaborative approach in order to identify and eliminate barriers throughout the travel journey.

3.3 The implementation of existing international and regional instruments should be strengthened, harmonization of procedures should be promoted, existing infrastructure and services should be enhanced, staff should receive training and persons with disabilities and the organizations that represent them should be involved in the design of accessibility policies and measures.

3.4 The implementation of accessibility measures requires reliable information to enable a true understanding of the air travel experience of passengers with disabilities. To that end, studies and analyses should be conducted and data should be collected to establish baselines and identify the barriers that are excluding persons with disabilities from air transport, so that States, airport operators and air operators can adopt evidence-based decisions and direct their efforts towards enhancing the inclusiveness and dignity of civil aviation.

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