



WORKING PAPER

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

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Agenda Item 3: Strengthening regulatory and institutional frameworks

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

**ADVANCING SERVICES FOR FIRST-TIME FLYERS TO ENHANCE THE UNIVERSAL
ACCESSIBILITY OF CIVIL AVIATION AND DRIVE LONG-TERM MARKET EXPANSION**

(Presented by China)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper, submitted by China for consideration at the Seventh Worldwide Air Transport Conference (ATConf/7), presents the progress of China's civil aviation sector in providing services for first-time flyers. It elaborates on the value and recommended measures regarding first-time flyer services, with the objective of further advancing the universal accessibility of air transport, improving the passenger experience in global aviation, and unlocking untapped market potential in civil aviation passenger traffic.

The core vision of the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Long-Term Strategic Plan 2026–2050 is to establish a safe, secure, sustainable, and globally accessible air transport system that benefits all nations and peoples. Since 2021, China has been implementing first-time flyer services, which have now benefited nearly 100 million passengers. This initiative is highly aligned with ICAO's latest strategic planning and serves as a compelling example in advancing the vision of “aviation for all.”

Action by the Conference is in Section 3

<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This working paper relates to 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 and No Country Left Behind.</i>
<i>Financial implications:</i>	The activities referred to in this paper will be undertaken subject to the resources available in the 2026–2028 Regular Budget and/or from extra budgetary contributions.
<i>References:</i>	ICAO <i>Strategic Plan 2026-2050</i>

¹ English and Chinese versions provided by China.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Global Profile of First-Time Flyers and Service Gaps

1.1.1. The sustained recovery and growth of the global civil aviation industry have led to a steady increase in passenger travel demand. Global air passenger traffic is projected to reach 12.4 billion by 2050. As the global aviation market continues to expand, first-time flyers are expected to become a major passenger segment. Taking China as an example, by the end of 2025, although the country's aviation population had exceeded 500 million, approximately 900 million people had never taken a flight, with annual per capita air trips standing at only 0.55. China's annual increase in aviation population remains stable at 30 to 40 million, making first-time flyers a significant source of incremental passenger demand.

1.1.2. Lacking prior experience in air travel, first-time flyers are often unfamiliar with airport procedures, boarding regulations, and security screening requirements, which tends to cause anxiety during their journey and may even lead to missed flights or complaints. Their service experience directly affects the overall service reputation of the civil aviation industry. Standardizing service quality for first-time flyers and enhancing their familiarity with and recognition of civil aviation transport services are important measures for tapping into potential passenger sources, stabilizing low-frequency travellers, and expanding the scale of the civil aviation transport service market.

1.2. ICAO Strategic Arrangements and Current Status of Service Standards

1.2.1. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) *Strategic Plan 2026–2050* identifies among its strategic goals “Aviation Delivers Seamless, Accessible, and Reliable Mobility for All” and “The Economic Development of Air Transport Assures the Delivery of Economic Prosperity and Societal Well-Being for All,” reflecting ICAO's enduring commitment to sustainable development and to ensuring that the benefits of innovation reach all countries. These objectives also lay a solid foundation for the realization of “accessible and inclusive air transport for all.”

1.2.2. Although ICAO has established relevant Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) in the field of passenger services and has set forth provisions in Annex 9 to facilitate the transport of passengers with special needs, there remains a gap in service specifications specifically tailored to first-time flyers. The majority of airlines and airports in Member States have yet to recognize the importance of this initiative and have not launched relevant dedicated services, which constrains the overall enhancement of global civil aviation passenger service quality.

1.3. Purpose of the Proposal

1.3.1. This paper is intended to systematically elaborate on the value and feasibility of promoting first-time flyer services on a global scale, based on China's practical experience of piloting such services in the northwestern region since 2021 and subsequently extending them nationwide. In light of ICAO's latest strategic priorities and areas of focus, the paper puts forward specific recommendations. It is hoped that ICAO will take note of the significance of this initiative, thereby contributing to the inclusive growth and sustainable development of the global civil aviation industry.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Introduction of First-Time Flyer Services in China

- a) **Basic Facts about First-Time Flyer Services in China.** As the world's most populous developing country with significant regional development disparities, China's practice in first-time flyer services has demonstrated that this model is also scalable in countries and regions with large populations, low aviation penetration rates, and unbalanced regional development. Since the introduction of first-time flyer services, China's aviation population has grown rapidly at an average rate of approximately 30 million people per year. This fully attests to the notable effectiveness of first-time flyer services in expanding aviation service coverage and enhancing accessibility of civil aviation in developing countries.
- b) **Major Practices in China.** First-time flyers, being unfamiliar with the complete flight procedures, generally experience anxiety and nervousness, which may easily lead to missed flights, no-show boarding, difficulties in check-in procedures, and may also pose uncertainties to aviation safety and security. This group has prominent information needs and requires clear, intuitive travel guidance. The services provided for first-time flyers are centered on passenger needs, aiming to create a safe, convenient, comfortable, and thoughtful full-chain travel guarantee. Through multiple approaches including voluntary passenger declaration, intelligent algorithm identification, and on-site observation of passengers' demeanor and behavior, first-time flyers are accurately identified. Services are provided upon obtaining passenger consent, accompanied by full-process or segmented companion services, complemented by travel guidance and key-node reminders, effectively alleviating passengers' psychological anxiety while reducing their unfamiliarity with the travel process. First-time flyer services run through the entire passenger travel chain, covering pre-travel services, ground services, cabin services, transfer services, baggage services, and various special scenario services, meeting the travel needs of first-time flyers in all aspects while ensuring aviation safety.
- c) **China's Experience: A Phased Approach:**
 - Pilot Phase (June 2021 – December 2022): The “Caring for First-Time Flyers to Ensure Smooth Travel” campaign was launched in northwestern China, yielding positive outcomes and valuable insights.
 - Roll-out Phase (January 2023 – December 2023): The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) issued the *Guiding Opinions on Service Facilitation for First-Time Flyers*, extending the northwestern experience nationwide. During the same period, the scope of first-time flyer services was expanded to include passengers taking their first international flights.
 - Standardization Phase (January 2024 – present): The development of an industry standard for first-time flyer services is planned. A draft of the *Requirements for First-Time Flyer Services in Civil Aviation* has been released for public consultation to establish baseline service standards.

2.2 The Value of Promoting Services for First-Time Flyers

2.2.1 Services for first-time flyers are characterized by low cost, high efficiency, and strong replicability, making them feasible for promotion worldwide:

- a) **Implementing the *No Country Left Behind* strategic goal and promoting inclusive growth.** First-time flyer services are broadly applicable across States, as many developing countries face similar circumstances. Extending service coverage to the vast population in different countries who have never flown before — helping them learn about civil aviation, choose air travel, and enjoy aviation services — is a concrete manifestation of the *No Country Left Behind* strategic goal at the passenger service level.
- b) **Promoting inclusive access to civil aviation and broadening the reach of air transport services.** This approach is consistent with ICAO's objective of promoting the popularization of civil aviation, and facilitates a shift in the focus of air transport from serving experienced travellers to serving the public at large.
- c) **Requiring low implementation costs with no need for large-scale investment.** Building on existing passenger service systems, services for first-time flyers provide additional assistance through enhanced service standards, optimized service processes and personnel training. They require no additional resource inputs, achieve an appropriate balance between service quality and implementation costs, and can be adapted to the different levels and circumstances of civil aviation development among Member States.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that the Conference:

- a) note China's practices and progress in first-time flyer services and in expanding the aviation population, which serve as a strong model for developing countries;
- b) request ICAO to task relevant panels to discuss, study and develop guidance to encourage Member States to prioritize first-time flyer services, share experience and measures for such services, and promote the strategy of making air transport more accessible to the general public.

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