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WORKING PAPER

SEVENTH WORLDWIDE AIR TRANSPORT CONFERENCE (ATCONF/7)

Montréal, HQ, 16 to 20 November 2026

Agenda Item 1: Overview of developments in the field of air transport
1.2: Air transport in ICAO's long term strategic plan: Accelerating aviation towards 2050

ADVANCING NO COUNTRY LEFT BEHIND (NCLB) STRATEGIC GOAL THROUGH ENHANCED VISIBILITY OF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

(Presented by Japan)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper discusses the importance of capacity development support as a foundation for addressing the capability gaps that persist among States, under the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Strategic Plan 2026–2050 and the *No Country Left Behind* (NCLB) strategic goal. Building on discussions at the 42nd ICAO Assembly, it proposes enhancing visibility, information-sharing and coordination of capacity development support activities, including through possible voluntary inventory arrangements.

Action: The proposed actions by the conference are detailed in paragraph 3.4.

Strategic Goal:	This working paper relates to the Strategic Goals of *The Economic Development of Air Transport Assures the Delivery of Economic Prosperity and Societal Well-Being for All;* and *No Country Left Behind.*
Financial implications:	The activities referred to in this paper should be undertaken subject to the resources available in "Undetermined" and/or from extra budgetary contributions. Other financial implications will vary across Member States.
References:	ICAO Strategic Plan 2026–2050 Assembly Resolution A42-23, *Consolidated statement of ICAO policies on technical cooperation and technical assistance* ICAO Assembly Resolution A42-26 (*Consolidated statement of continuing ICAO policies in the air transport field*) A41-24, *Aviation's contribution towards the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* Assembly Resolution A39-23, *No Country Left Behind (NCLB) Initiative* ICAO Concept Note (*Enhancing Global Coordination of Aviation Capacity Development and Implementation Support Activities*) *Marrakech Ministerial Call to Action* (ICAO Global Implementation Support Symposium (GISS 2026)) Asia and Pacific 61st Conference of Directors General of Civil Aviation (APAC DGCA/61) Outcome Report

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The economic development of air transport is intended to deliver economic prosperity and societal well-being for all. However, disparities persist among States in aviation-related infrastructure and human resource development, and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Strategic Goal *No Country Left Behind* (NCLB) has yet to be fully realized.

1.2 Through its NCLB initiatives, ICAO has consistently emphasized the importance of narrowing implementation gaps so that all States can participate in, and benefit from, the development of global aviation.

1.3 Capacity development support is one of the most effective means of reducing such disparities and advancing the objectives of NCLB. This paper examines the opportunity to achieve balanced global development in the aviation sector by enhancing the visibility of capacity development support, in furtherance of ICAO's NCLB Strategic Goal.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The Continuing Need for Capacity Development Support

2.1.1 Guided by Resolutions A39-23, A41-24 as well as A42-23 and under the ICAO Strategic Plan 2026–2050, particularly the NCLB Strategic Goal, ICAO strives that all States — particularly Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) — steadily close the capability gaps that remain in the aviation sector. Capacity development support provides the foundation for addressing these structural gaps and is an indispensable element in achieving balanced aviation development worldwide.

2.1.2 The importance of capacity development support in the aviation sector has been reaffirmed through recent ICAO deliberations and outcomes, including the 42nd Session of the ICAO Assembly (A42), the *Marrakech Ministerial Call to Action* adopted at the Global Implementation Support Symposium (GISS 2026) and the action items of the Asia and Pacific 61st Conference of Directors General of Civil Aviation (APAC DGCA/61). These outcomes have highlighted the importance of implementation support, partnerships and international cooperation in addressing aviation development needs.

2.1.3 Capacity development is a key element in enabling all States to implement, on their own, ICAO's efforts to support the safe, secure, sustainable and efficient development of international civil aviation. The effective implementation of ICAO's Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) depends not only on regulatory frameworks but also, to a significant extent, on each State's institutional, technical and human resource capacity.

2.1.4 While significant progress has been made in many regions, considerable challenges remain in effectively implementing ICAO's SARPs and in preparing for emerging priorities in the aviation sector, such as digital transformation (DX), environmental sustainability, the modernization of air navigation, and new aviation technologies.

2.1.5 Many States, particularly developing countries, continue to face constraints in technical expertise, human resources, institutional capacity and access to specialized training. Sustained efforts to strengthen and expand capacity development support in the aviation sector are therefore essential to promoting safe, secure, sustainable and efficient aviation development worldwide.

2.2 Enhancing the Visibility of Capacity Development Support and Strengthening Coordination

2.2.1 Capacity development support in the aviation sector is delivered through a wide range of mechanisms, including ICAO programmes, bilateral cooperation arrangements, regional initiatives, development agencies, financial institutions and other international frameworks.

2.2.2 These efforts contribute significantly to the balanced development of global aviation. However, information on activities that are currently underway or planned is, in many cases, dispersed across various organizations and cooperation frameworks, as is information on corresponding needs.

2.2.3 Enhancing the visibility of these activities could help States, development partners and recipient countries gain a deeper understanding of available support, identify unmet needs, foster partnerships, and make effective use of available resources.

2.2.4 Strengthening information-sharing would also help reduce unnecessary duplication, improve coordination among stakeholders, and promote more strategic delivery of support. In addition, enhanced visibility could serve as a basis for more accurately identifying areas of remaining capability gaps, particularly in developing countries such as LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, thereby informing the prioritization of support under the NCLB initiatives.

2.3 Practical Measures to Enhance Synergy

2.3.1 In response to proposals regarding capacity-building support made at the A42, ICAO has developed a concept note titled "*Enhancing Global Coordination of Aviation Capacity Development and Implementation Support Activities*" and plans to convene the inaugural Global Aviation Implementation Partners Coordination Meeting alongside the GISS in May 2027. The initiative aims to explore ways to strengthen coordination, information-sharing and collaboration among entities engaged in aviation capacity development and implementation support activities.

2.3.2 As part of these exploratory efforts, interested States could, on a voluntary basis and as appropriate, share information on their implementation support and capacity development activities in coordination with existing ICAO initiatives while enhancing implementation support and capacity development cooperation. Such information sharing could help gain a broader picture of support activities, promote cooperation among stakeholders, and identify opportunities for additional support in areas where capability gaps remain.

2.3.3 Any information collected would complement, rather than replace existing implementation support initiatives and coordination mechanisms but would instead function as a practical tool to enhance transparency, foster partnerships and support discussions on how implementation support efforts can be better coordinated and aligned with States' needs and ICAO priorities.

2.3.4 As consultations progress, stakeholders may wish to explore approaches for mapping ongoing implementation support activities and existing coordination arrangements, thereby enabling identification of good practices, potential synergies and areas where enhanced cooperation could add value. Such coordination could, at a later stage and as appropriate, include sharing of information on the priority needs of States requiring support.

2.3.5 Any future developments would continue to be considered in consultation with participating stakeholders and on a voluntary basis.

2.4 Complementary activities by Japan

2.4.1 Japan continues to contribute to aviation capacity-building support both within and outside the ICAO framework through technical cooperation programmes, bilateral assistance, and regional and international partnerships.

2.4.2 To make capacity-development assistance provided by different States more visible, Japan proposed at the APAC DGCA/61 Meeting in September 2026 the establishment of a voluntary inventory of capacity-building activities, and the proposal received positive interests from Participants. While recognizing the value of future discussions within ICAO on strengthening coordination, information-sharing and transparency, Japan considers that voluntary inventory arrangements could serve as a useful initial step for implementation support activities and enhancing the visibility of capacity development support.

2.4.3 Building on this initiative, Japan intends to develop an inventory of capacity-development activities in the APAC region and share information on related activities and outcomes, with a view to strengthening both capacity-development support and coordination mechanisms.

2.4.4 Japan hopes that the lessons learned, and experience gained through this initiative will provide useful references for similar discussions in other regions and would be pleased to exchange views with interested regions in the future.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 Capacity development support remains essential to the effective implementation of ICAO's SARPs and to advancing ICAO's *No Country Left Behind* (NCLB) Strategic Goal.

3.2 Enhancing visibility, information-sharing and coordination can complement existing capacity development efforts and contribute to the NCLB Strategic Goal.

3.3 In this regard, continued examination of practical approaches to improving the visibility and coordination of capacity development activities, including through ongoing ICAO initiatives, could further support implementation assistance and international cooperation.

3.4 The conference is invited to:

a) recognize that capacity development in the aviation sector remains essential to the effective implementation of ICAO's Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) and the *No Country Left Behind* (NCLB) Strategic Goal;

b) encourage States, international organizations and development partners to strengthen and expand capacity development support;

c) encourage greater visibility, information-sharing and coordination with respect to aviation capacity development activities carried out within and outside the ICAO framework; and

d) request ICAO to continue examining and facilitating practical approaches to improve the coordination and visibility of capacity development activities.

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