



**WORKING PAPER**

**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**

**2.1: Integrating civil aviation into national development and investment plans**

**GLOBAL AND REGIONAL AIR TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

(Presented by Ethiopia on behalf of 54 Member States of the African Civil Aviation Commission<sup>2</sup>)

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This paper proposes developing a Global Air Transport Development Plan (GATDP), supported by Regional Air Transport Development Plans and common planning guidance for States. Although aviation benefits from mature global plans for safety, air navigation and security, its economic and developmental dimensions are often pursued through separate policies, projects and initiatives. A structured planning architecture would connect the full air transport ecosystem, translate policy into implementable roadmaps and investment priorities, and support States and regions at different levels of readiness, particularly least developed, landlocked, small island and least-connected markets.

**Action:** The Conference is invited to:

- recognize the need for a coherent global and regional planning architecture for the sustainable development of international air transport;
- request ICAO to develop a Global Air Transport Development Plan in consultation with States, regions and industry;
- request ICAO to collaborate with regional organizations, including the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), in developing and piloting regionally owned Air Transport Development Plans that translate global priorities and regional needs into practical implementation roadmaps; and
- request ICAO to develop guidance, a model planning template and common indicators for national and regional air transport development plans.

*Strategic Goal:*

This working paper relates primarily to the Strategic Goal: *The Economic Development of Air Transport Assures the Delivery of Economic Prosperity and Societal Well-Being for All*. It also supports the Strategic Goals: *Seamless, Accessible and Reliable Mobility for All* and *No Country Left Behind*.

<sup>1</sup> English and French versions provided by AFCAC.

<sup>2</sup> Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

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| <i>Financial implications:</i> | The proposed scoping, consultation, guidance and plan-development work would require ICAO Secretariat resources. It could initially draw on existing programmes, partnerships and voluntary contributions; subsequent development and implementation would be subject to the programme budget and resource mobilization.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <i>References:</i>             | Doc 7300, <i>Convention on International Civil Aviation</i> , Article 44<br>ICAO Strategic Plan 2026–2050<br>Doc 10004, <i>2026-2028 Global Aviation Safety Plan</i><br>Doc 9750, <i>Global Air Navigation Plan</i><br>Doc 10116, <i>Global Aviation Security Plan</i><br>Agenda of the Seventh Worldwide Air Transport Conference (ATConf/7)<br>Doc 9626, <i>Manual on the Regulation of International Air Transport</i><br>Doc 9587, <i>Policy and Guidance Material on the Economic Regulation of International Air Transport</i> |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. International air transport is a critical enabler of trade, tourism, investment, employment, social inclusion, and access to markets and services. Its sustainable development depends on the coordinated performance of the entire aviation ecosystem, including policy and regulation, airlines, airports, air navigation services, connectivity, facilitation, safety and security, human capital, data and digital systems, environmental action, resilience, and financing.

1.2 Article 44 of the *Convention on International Civil Aviation* (Chicago Convention) provides a clear basis for an integrated planning approach by requiring ICAO to foster the planning and development of international air transport and to promote the safe, orderly, efficient and economical growth of international civil aviation. Building on this mandate, ICAO's Strategic Plan 2026–2050 sets out an overarching direction for a safe, secure, sustainable, seamless and economically viable global aviation system. A dedicated air transport development plan would strengthen this architecture by linking connectivity, economic development, infrastructure, human capital and implementation support within a coherent, results-based framework.

## 2. THE PLANNING GAP

2.1 Aviation already benefits from mature global planning instruments in key technical areas, notably the Global Aviation Safety Plan, Global Air Navigation Plan and Global Aviation Security Plan. These establish common objectives, priorities, implementation mechanisms, and indicators while allowing adaptation to national and regional circumstances, helping align policy, technical assistance, and investment around shared outcomes.

2.2 By contrast, the economic and developmental dimensions of air transport are often pursued through separate liberalization, infrastructure, connectivity, facilitation and capacity-building initiatives. Without an integrated planning framework, these efforts may remain fragmented, creating gaps between policy, implementation, investment and measurable impact, particularly where delivery depends on coordination across multiple jurisdictions and sectors. A more coherent planning approach would help States and regional organizations sequence reforms, infrastructure, skills and financing needs, while presenting more credible and bankable programmes to development partners and investors.

### 3. THE CASE FOR GLOBAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

3.1 The future Global Air Transport Development Plan should be aligned with existing ICAO global plans and policies, ensure coherence between air transport development objectives and ICAO's other strategic objectives. It should serve as an integrating development framework that connects them with air connectivity, accessibility, affordability, infrastructure and investment, logistics and multimodal transportation, regulatory modernization, facilitation, human capital, data and digital transformation, institutional capacity, pandemic and crisis resilience, environmental priorities and resilience.

3.2 Regional Air Transport Development Plans would translate that global framework into the economic, geographic, institutional and market realities of each region. Some air transport constraints and opportunities are regional. Regional plans can therefore bridge global objectives and national implementation while supporting cooperation among States, regional organizations, industry and financing institutions.

3.3 The regional tier is also essential to the *No Country Left Behind* Strategic Goal. States begin from different levels of traffic, connectivity, institutional capacity and investment readiness. Different and phased implementation pathways can respond to the needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States, secondary cities and least-connected markets. Regional plans can identify targeted solutions, including public-service connectivity, route-development support, pooled capacity, shared infrastructure and technical assistance, without imposing a uniform model.

3.4 The proposed architecture would respect the sovereignty of States and the voluntary, State-led nature of aviation development planning. The global plan would establish shared outcomes and planning principles; regional plans would define common regional priorities and cooperative actions; and national plans would determine domestic policy, investment and implementation decisions in accordance with national circumstances and applicable international obligations.

### 4. PROPOSED CONTENT AND PLANNING ARCHITECTURE

4.1 The Global Air Transport Development Plan should establish a common long-term vision, measurable objectives and principles for competitive, accessible, affordable, resilient and sustainable air transport development. It should provide a common diagnostic and planning methodology and an integrated framework covering connectivity, infrastructure and investment, logistics and multimodal transport, regulatory modernization, facilitation, human capital, institutional capacity, digital transformation, crisis preparedness and environmental sustainability. The Plan should also provide differentiated and phased implementation pathways for States and regions at different levels of readiness; define governance, partnership, financing and capacity-building arrangements; and establish a limited set of comparable performance indicators, reporting mechanisms and periodic review processes. It should align with the ICAO Strategic Plan and complement existing ICAO technical and environmental frameworks without duplicating them.

4.2 Each Regional Air Transport Development Plan should contain a regional baseline and demand outlook; priority passenger routes, cargo networks and wider economic corridors; infrastructure and operational-readiness requirements; regulatory and institutional reforms; facilitation and seamless-mobility measures; skills and capacity-building needs; data and digital priorities; environmental and resilience actions; a prioritized project and investment framework; a time-bound implementation roadmap; clearly assigned responsibilities; financing options; and indicators for monitoring outputs and outcomes.

4.3 ICAO guidance for national and regional planning should provide a model structure, minimum data requirements, quality-assurance arrangements, stakeholder-consultation methods, demand and scenario-analysis tools, criteria for prioritizing projects, safeguards for transparent and non-discriminatory support, approaches to financing and resource mobilization, and a monitoring and evaluation framework. The guidance should be scalable so that States with limited data or capacity can begin with a realistic minimum plan and strengthen it progressively.

4.4 Planning should be outcome oriented. Common indicators could cover connectivity; accessibility and affordability; passenger and cargo volumes; airport and air navigation capacity; facilitation and processing times; regulatory implementation; workforce capacity; data availability and quality; investment mobilized; environmental performance; and resilience. Indicators should draw, wherever possible, on existing ICAO and regional reporting systems to avoid unnecessary new reporting burdens.

## **5. A CASE FOR EARLY REGIONAL PILOTING**

5. Regions with developing economies, including Africa, offer a strong case for early application of the proposed approach. Africa's aviation priorities are closely linked to Agenda 2063, Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), regional integration, and infrastructure development, yet markets continue to vary widely in scale, connectivity, institutional capacity, and investment readiness. Persistent connectivity gaps, high transport costs and unequal access to air services reinforce the need for more coordinated regional air transport development. The African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) therefore stands ready to work with States and regional bodies to ensure African leadership in developing a Continental Air Transport Development Plan, supported by an initial implementation roadmap and assistance from ICAO, partners and stakeholders.

5.2 An early pilot involving ICAO, AFCAC, the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, States, industry and development-finance institutions could test a common methodology, establish a regional baseline, validate priority programmes and project pipelines, and develop a results-based monitoring framework. It would also help align technical assistance and financing with SAATM implementation, national development priorities and broader regional integration objectives.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

6.1 The global aviation community has demonstrated the value of structured plans in aligning policy, capacity-building, investment, and accountability. Extending this planning discipline to the economic and developmental dimension of air transport would close an important implementation gap. A Global Air Transport Development Plan, supported by regional plans and practical national guidance, would help turn international commitments into coordinated, inclusive and measurable development outcomes.

6.2 The Conference is invited to support the actions set out in the Executive Summary and requests ICAO to work with AFCAC, States, regional organizations and industry in developing the proposed planning architecture and piloting a Regional Air Transport Development Plan for Africa.

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