



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

**1.1: Developments and progress since the Sixth Worldwide Air Transport Conference
(ATConf/6)**

**PROPOSED CONFERENCE INTERVAL AND PERIODIC REPORTING
TO ENSURE PROGRESS ON THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF
AIR TRANSPORT IN LINE WITH THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL
AVIATION ORGANIZATION (ICAO) STRATEGIC PLAN 2050**

(Presented by Saudi Arabia)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The long interval between Worldwide Air Transport Conferences —typically spanning a decade unlike how it started in 1977—creates a significant gap in advancing the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Strategic plan 2026-2050 and its Strategic Goal of Economic Development of Air Transport. The rapid pace of global market evolution, technological advancements, and unforeseen external shocks and forces all demonstrate that a decade-long wait to formally gather Member States, industry partners, and other stakeholders to make major developments in the economic development of air transport and push progress in regulatory frameworks may no longer be practical and comprehensive, keeping in mind that only approximately two more Conferences are expected before the culmination of ICAO Strategic Plan 2050. To address this, the paper provides two proposals: shortening the span between each Conference to 5 years instead of 10 years, and developing a periodic reporting mechanism by ICAO, engaging and empowering Member States with timely insights, policymaking alignment, and sustained momentum in achieving ICAO's strategic economic objective until 2050.

Action: The Conference is invited to adopt the actions in Section 3.

<i>Strategic Goal:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Goal: <i>The Economic Development of Air Transport Assures the Delivery of Economic Prosperity and Societal Well-Being for All.</i>
<i>Financial implications:</i>	
<i>References:</i>	Assembly Resolution A42-26 – <i>Consolidated statement of continuing ICAO policies in the air transport field</i> <i>ICAO Strategic Plan 2026–2050</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Worldwide Air Transport Conference serves as a premier global forum for establishing consensus on the economic regulation, modernization, and sustainable development of international civil aviation. During the Seventh Worldwide Air Transport Conference (ATConf/7) and under its agenda item 1.1, States are reviewing major developments in the air transport industry and progress in regulatory frameworks since the Sixth Worldwide Air Transport Conference (ATConf/6), which took place 13 years ago in 2013.

1.2 Over the span of the past 13 years, international air transport has experienced unprecedented shifts, including the devastating aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, rapid innovations altering the passenger journey, and evolving market trends that continually reshape global aviation policy and regulation.

1.3 While the Conference provides strategic directions and priorities, the extended interval between these Conferences (often 10 years or more) may diminish their recommendations magnitude and progress. Also, it's important to keep Member States continuously engaged, informed, and actively participating throughout the period, rather than deferring the assessment of progress to a single, retrospective review at the period's conclusion.

1.4 To ensure sustained engagement, this paper proposes a 5-year period between the Conferences rather than 10 years, as well as the development of a periodic reporting mechanism by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to ensure the progress of recommendations of ATConf/7 in light of the Economic Development of Air Transport Strategic Goal, bridging the gap between the current Conference and the upcoming Eight Worldwide Air Transport Conference (namely ATConf/8), and establishing a structured precedent for future cycles.

2. DISCUSSION

The Gap in the Current Prolonged Interval

2.1 When the Conference first started in 1977 to tackle major problems confronting international air transport not already being dealt with through then-existing ICAO machinery on a worldwide basis, it used to occur within an interval of 3-5 years, until after the third Conference it was stretched to 10 years. However, the context has much changed ever since, with the development of the Strategic Plan 2026-2050, having the Conference serving as a pivotal platform for the progress of the Strategic Goal *The Economic Development of Air Transport Assures the Delivery of Economic Prosperity and Societal Well-Being for All*.

2.2 The current structure of progressing the Strategic Goal through an accumulation of over ten years with a review only at the conclusion of the period may be inadequate, especially for such a dynamic, fast-paced industry. It is impractical to set the direction for a ten-year period and then measure its progress, effectiveness, and relevance at the period's conclusion, rather than continuously engaging States in regularly assessing progress, identifying emerging bottlenecks, and making agile policy adjustments to ensure optimal outcomes.

2.3 Preserving a ten-year interval would only allow two further Conferences before the culmination of the Strategic Plan in 2050 (assuming 8th in 2036, and 9th in 2046). Furthermore, in the spirit of this Seventh Conference to endorse a Ministerial Declaration conveying a political will towards progress,

it is proposed to further embody such a message through shortening the intervals of convening Conferences to five years instead of ten years.

Developing a Periodic Reporting Mechanism

2.4 As air transport is highly exposed to external forces and new economic trends emerging between conferences, the magnitude of such risks or opportunities may be diluted in the absence of continuous, structured feedback on the economic effectiveness, resilience, and adaptability of the sector. A periodic structured reporting and feedback mechanism is necessary especially to keep States and industry partners engaged with timely insights, policymaking alignment, and sustained momentum until 2050. This would also build a proper baseline for the upcoming Conference (namely ATConf/8) to be convened backed by a comprehensive and structured progress achieved.

3. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

3.1 The Conference is invited to:

- a) request the Council to approve shortening the currently designed interval between Worldwide Air Transport Conferences to be five years rather than ten years, having the convening of ATConf/8 to be at the start of 2031;
- b) urge the Council with technical support from relevant subsidiary bodies to develop a periodic reporting/stocktaking mechanism to be delivered and discussed no later than three years from the conclusion of each Conference starting from ATConf/7 to track progress of recommendations and conclusions adopted and to ensure sustained momentum; and
- c) request the Secretariat to continue its efforts in engaging Member States, industry partners, and interested stakeholders on major advancement of the Economic Development of Air Transport Strategic Goal in the interim years leading up to ATConf/8 by 2031.

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