



WORKING PAPER

ASSEMBLY — 40TH SESSION

ECONOMIC COMMISSION

Agenda Item 36: Other issues to be considered by the Economic Commission

**CLOSURE OF AIRSPACE AND ITS IMPACT
ON INTERNATIONAL AIR TRAFFIC
(INCLUDING SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT)**

(Presented by the State of Qatar)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper presents the risks associated with the closure of airspace which, in turn, affects the efficiency of international routes in terms of their capacity to accommodate additional traffic by reason of the closure. The closure leads to longer flight hours and therefore to an increase in fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions with the ensuing impact on environment.

Action: The Assembly is invited to act for the prevention of politicizing the use of airspace, particularly international routes.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Objectives — <i>Economic Development of Air Transport</i> .
<i>Financial implications:</i>	N/O
<i>References:</i>	Chicago Convention Assembly Resolution A39/15 – <i>Consolidated statement of continuing ICAO policies in the air transport field</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Air transport is an engine for economic development of States. According to IATA forecasts, the number of passengers in the world will reach 6.5 billion, creating 103 million jobs and contributing 5.8 billion US dollars to the world economic activity by 2030. It is as well an important link among states and constitutes an enabling factor for economic prosperity. We should, therefore, endeavor to limit the impact of trade and geo-strategic tensions in some regions on the international air transport sector.

¹ Arabic version submitted by Qatar.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Despite the challenges posed by the closure of neighboring air-space for the aircrafts registered in the State of Qatar, it has succeeded in limiting its impact on the population. It has even seized that opportunity to develop local sectors thus realizing an economic growth in 2018 which is continuing in 2019. However, the closure had a negative effect on the air transport sector because of the rise in expenditures as a consequence of the use of alternative routes causing long detours from and to Qatar and leading to an increase in operations' costs, including the fuel consumption.

3. RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CLOSURE OF AIRSPACE FOR AVIATION SAFETY AND SECURITY

3.1 With the rapid growth of civil aviation and the dedication of 40 to 60 percent of the airspace to military activity in the Gulf region, only narrow corridors are left for civil usage. The crowding of those corridors requires a trajectory update for the absorption of this continuous traffic growth.

3.2 By prohibiting the use of international air routes in their airspace, some States violate international treaties governing civil aviation, which are signed by all the Member States of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Such decision also poses risks to aviation safety and security as a result of the incapacity of already crowded alternative routes to absorb such growth in traffic. It is noteworthy that the use of these routes leads to long detours, extended flight hours, more fuel consumption and therefore an increase in CO2 emissions.

4. QATAR CONTINUES ITS PROGRAMME FOR CIVIL AVIATION SAFETY AND SECURITY IMPROVEMENT

4.1 Qatar continues its leading role in the development of international civil aviation, through its Civil Aviation Authority, Hamad International Airport and its national carrier Qatar Airways, which serves more than 200 destinations over the world. Keen on preserving the safety and security of aviation in the Gulf region, Qatar did not retaliate against the measures taken and did not prevent the aircrafts registered in the four States from using Qatar airspace. By allowing the use of its airspace, without discrimination, to all international commercial aircrafts, Qatar is complying with the International Transit Agreement and Montreal Convention of 1999 as well as with other international instruments on international air transport. Thanks to the support of ICAO, Qatar has sensitized the world aviation community on the importance of preserving the safety of aviation in the Gulf region and of re-opening some of international air routes that were closed to Qatar aircrafts.

5. RECOMMENDATION

5.1 The rapid growth of air traffic in the gulf led to a crowded airspace and to more challenges in the management of air traffic management. This requires the states of the region to reconsider the concept of collective action in order to avail themselves of future opportunities in the aviation sector. They should therefore refrain from politicizing the use or the closure of international air routes over their airspace, while safeguarding the sovereign right of States to operate commercial flights to their territories, hence contributing to their national economies, to the development of the aviation industry and ensuring the safety of the sector.

5.2 The Civil Aviation Authority of Qatar calls upon the Member States participating in the 40th Assembly to endorse the proposal of keeping technical and commercial issues out of political disputes that impact the international air transport operations and efficiency, including safety and security. The Assembly resolution A39-15 urges Member States to avoid taking unilateral measures which may negatively affect the orderly and sustainable growth of international air transport.

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