



WORKING PAPER

FACILITATION PANEL (FALP)

FOURTEENTH MEETING

Montréal, 20 April to 24 April 2026

Agenda Item 3: Amendments to Annex 9 — *Facilitation*

**ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY IN PASSENGER INFORMATION AND NAVIGATION FOR
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES:
ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION DURING DISRUPTIONS & EMERGENCIES AND
ACCESSIBLE WAYFINDING & SIGNAGE**

(Presented by Qatar)

SUMMARY

Annex 9 — *Facilitation* includes general provisions for the treatment of passengers with disabilities. However, critical gaps remain regarding accessible communication during operational disruptions and emergencies, as well as accessible wayfinding and airport signage. These areas are essential for ensuring the independent, safe, and dignified movement of passengers with disabilities across airport environments.

Disruptions such as gate changes, delays, irregular operations (IROPS), and emergency situations disproportionately affect passengers with disabilities when communication is provided only in a single format. Similarly, the lack of harmonized global requirements for accessible wayfinding—such as tactile pathways, high-contrast signage, Braille information, and visual display systems—limits the mobility and autonomy of millions of travelers.

To ensure that accessibility in facilitation is comprehensive and aligned with international norms, it is necessary for Annex 9 to explicitly address accessible communication and wayfinding systems. This working paper proposes new Standards for inclusion in Annex 9 and corresponding guidance for Doc 9957, *The Facilitation Manual* and Doc 10042, *Model National Air Transport Facilitation Programme*.

Action by the FAL Panel:

The FAL Panel is invited to:

- a) consider the proposal in section 3 to introduce new Standards requiring accessible communication during disruptions and emergencies.
- b) consider the proposal in section 3 to introduce new Standards requiring accessible wayfinding and signage at airports.
- c) consider the proposal in section 3 to update Doc 9636, *International Signs to Provide Guidance to Persons at Airports and Marine Terminals* to provide clarity and uniformity, as the current version does not reflect modern accessibility standards nor do the signage systems used in contemporary airport environments.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Annex 9 — *Facilitation* contains important provisions relating to the treatment of persons with disabilities; however, two essential operational areas remain unaddressed:

1.1.1 Accessible communication during disruptions, irregular operations (IROPS), and emergency situations. Learning from Safety and Security Oversight Models.

1.1.1.1 These gaps limit States' ability to fully achieve accessibility objectives and create inconsistencies in global implementation.

1.1.1.2 Operational disruptions and emergency situations often rely heavily on spoken announcements, which are inaccessible to deaf or hard-of-hearing passengers. Conversely, visually impaired passengers depend on tactile or auditory tools to navigate complex terminals that often lack proper wayfinding infrastructure.

1.1.2 Accessible wayfinding and signage to ensure safe, independent, and dignified mobility within airport environments.

1.1.2.1 Doc 9636, *International Signs to Provide Guidance to Persons at Airports and Marine Terminals* was developed several decades ago and no longer reflects the signage systems currently used in modern airport environments. Many of its pictograms, design principles, and accessibility elements are outdated and do not align with evolving international standards for wayfinding, including requirements for passengers with disabilities. Airports today rely on high-contrast signage, simplified universal pictograms, tactile and Braille features, and dynamic digital wayfinding tools that are not adequately represented in the existing edition of Doc 9636. This gap creates inconsistencies in implementation and prevents States from adopting harmonized, accessible wayfinding solutions. Updating Doc 9636 is therefore essential to ensure that visual communication in airports is globally consistent, modern, and fully supportive of accessibility needs.

1.2 Given the significance of these issues, and the increasing global emphasis on universal accessibility, it is time for Annex 9 to reflect clear and actionable Standards in these areas.

2. DISCUSSION

Accessible Communication During Disruptions and Emergencies

2.1 Airports and airlines rely predominantly on audio announcements to communicate gate changes, delays, cancellations, security alerts, and emergency instructions. This practice excludes:

- a) deaf and hard-of-hearing passengers;
- b) passengers with cognitive disabilities requiring simplified visual instructions;
- c) neurodivergent passengers who struggle with sensory overload;
- d) elderly passengers with reduced hearing; and
- e) passengers who do not speak the broadcast language.

2.2 The lack of multi-format communication requirements in Annex 9 leads to significant operational inconsistencies across States and severely impacts accessibility.

2.3 Accessible communication is an essential component of facilitation, especially during evacuations, emergency procedures, and time-sensitive operational changes.

Accessible Wayfinding and Airport Signage

2.4 Airport environments remain complex and challenging to navigate. Many passengers with disabilities report difficulties due to:

- a) lack of tactile pathways;
- b) inconsistent Braille signage;
- c) lack of high-contrast visual signage;
- d) inaccessible electronic information displays;
- e) absence of hearing loop systems; and
- f) non-standardized pictograms or layouts across terminals.

2.5 Despite the importance of accessible wayfinding for independent movement, Annex 9 contains no explicit requirements addressing this issue.

Alignment with Existing Global Commitments

2.6 The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) calls on States to ensure accessibility in information, communication, mobility, and the physical environment. Aligning Annex 9 with these principles strengthens the global aviation sector's commitment to inclusive air travel.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Inclusion of New Standards in Annex 9 — *Facilitation*- Chapter 8. Section G

3.1 Proposed text for the new Standard (Accessible Communication):

“Contracting States shall ensure that operational information, including disruptions, gate changes, delays, cancellations, security situations, and emergency instructions, is communicated in at least two accessible formats, including visual and audio channels, to ensure full accessibility for passengers with disabilities.”

3.2 Proposed text for the new Standard (Accessible Wayfinding & Signage):

“Contracting States shall require that airports implement accessible wayfinding systems, including high-contrast signage, tactile pathways, and accessibility-compliant informational displays, to support the independent navigation of passengers with disabilities.”

Inclusion of Accessibility Elements in Doc 9957 — *Facilitation Manual*

3.3 It is proposed that Doc 9957 include a dedicated section addressing:

- a) multi-format communication during disruptions;

- b) accessibility in emergency announcements;
- c) use of captioning in visual systems;
- d) international best practices for airport wayfinding;
- e) tactile, auditory, and visual navigation tools;
- f) quiet routes for neurodivergent passengers; and
- g) accessibility maintenance procedures.

3.4 Consider updating Doc 9636, *International Signs to Provide Guidance to Persons at Airports and Marine Terminals* to align it with modern airport signage systems, including accessibility requirements such as high-contrast design, universal pictograms, tactile features, and harmonized layouts. Updating this document will support States in implementing globally consistent and accessible wayfinding solutions.”

APPENDIX

**NEW or REVISED SARP PROPOSAL: AMENDMENT, ANNEX 9, CHAPTER 8,
 [STANDARD/RECOMMENDED PRACTICE]**

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1. What is the problem that this proposal is designed to address?

Annex 9 —contains general provisions related to the treatment of passengers with disabilities; however, critical gaps remain with regard to accessible communication during operational disruptions and emergency situations, as well as accessible wayfinding and airport signage. Operational information is often provided through single-format audio announcements, creating barriers for passengers with disabilities and limiting their ability to move independently, safely, and with dignity within airport environments. In addition, the absence of harmonized global requirements for accessible wayfinding leads to inconsistent implementation across States and airports.

2. What alternatives to SARPs were considered to solve the problem?

None	Circular	Manual	Policy	Other (please explain)
				<i>Existing guidance material (Doc 9957 and Doc 9636) was reviewed, however, guidance alone is insufficient to ensure consistent global implementation. SARPs are required to address these gaps effectively.</i>

3a. What is the impact of this proposal on a State?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Implementing this proposal will enhance civil aviation safety		✓			
<i>Rationale: Accessible communication during disruptions and emergencies reduces confusion, improves passenger flow, and supports safe evacuation and emergency response, particularly for passengers with disabilities.</i>					
Implementing this proposal will increase air navigation capacity and improve efficiency		✓			
<i>Rationale: Clear, multi-format communication and accessible wayfinding reduce delays, congestion, and the need for individualized assistance during irregular operations.</i>					
Implementing this proposal will enhance global civil aviation security and facilitation (taking into account impact on human rights, health and privacy, if any)		✓			
<i>Rationale: The proposal strengthens facilitation outcomes while supporting human rights and accessibility commitments.</i>					
Implementing this proposal will foster the development of a sound and economically-viable civil aviation system		✓			
<i>Rationale: Harmonized accessibility standards improve predictability and consistency for States and operators without imposing disproportionate requirements.</i>					

Implementing this proposal will minimize the adverse environmental effects of civil aviation activities			✓		
<i>Rationale:</i> The proposal focuses on communication and wayfinding and does not have a direct environmental impact.					

3b. Do the benefits of this proposal justify the cost of its implementation?

Yes	No	Not sure	Not applicable
✓			

4a. What is the impact of this proposal on **Industry**?

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
Implementing this proposal will enhance civil aviation safety		✓			
<i>Rationale:</i> Multi-format communication improves passenger management during disruptions and emergencies.					
Implementing this proposal will increase air navigation capacity and improve efficiency		✓			
<i>Rationale:</i> Accessible wayfinding reduces operational bottlenecks and reliance on staff assistance.					
Implementing this proposal will enhance global civil aviation security and facilitation (taking into account impact on human rights, health and privacy, if any)		✓			
<i>Rationale:</i> Clear and accessible information supports orderly passenger movement and compliance during critical situations.					
Implementing this proposal will foster the development of a sound and economically-viable civil aviation system		✓			
<i>Rationale:</i> The proposal promotes scalable and proportionate measures aligned with modern airport operations.					
Implementing this proposal will minimize the adverse environmental effects of civil aviation activities			✓		
<i>Rationale:</i> The proposal focuses on communication and wayfinding and does not have a direct environmental impact.					

4b. Do the benefits of this proposal justify the cost of its implementation?

Yes	No	Not sure	Not applicable
✓			

5. How long would it take for States and Industry to implement this proposal?

Already implemented	0-1 years	1-2 years	2-5 years	5-10 years	More than 10 years
			✓		

6. Financial implications of the proposal

<p>The cost impact on States would include: Policy/procedure updates, coordination, oversight, and awareness/training related to multi-format communication and accessible wayfinding provisions.</p>
<p>The cost impact on the industry would include: Incremental costs to enhance multi-format communication and accessible wayfinding/signage (e.g., improved displays, signage, pictograms, tactile/Braille elements), often aligned with existing modernization and digital wayfinding upgrades.</p>

IMPLEMENTATION TASK LIST AND OUTLINE OF GUIDANCE MATERIAL

1. IMPLEMENTATION TASK LIST

1.1 Essential steps to be followed by a State in order to implement proposed amendments¹

- a) For States that already implement measures related to accessible communication and wayfinding, no immediate action may be required.
- b) For other States, the essential steps would include:
 - Review existing national legislation, regulations, policies, and procedures related to facilitation and the treatment of passengers with disabilities.
 - Conduct a gap analysis between existing national provisions and the proposed Annex 9 Standards on accessible communication during disruptions and emergencies, and accessible wayfinding and signage.
 - Decide whether new provisions or amendments are required to align national frameworks with the proposed Annex 9 Standards.
 - Develop or amend national provisions, as appropriate, to address identified gaps.
 - Formally adopt the amended provisions through the applicable national processes.
 - Implement the adopted provisions by relevant entities (e.g. airports, operators, service providers).
 - Establish or adjust oversight and supervision mechanisms, as appropriate, to monitor implementation and continued compliance.

¹ Amendment of a format or clarification nature are not allowed in this Appendix.

Legislation, regulations, policies, procedures, training, implementation, modification, supervision, assessment, compliance, gap analysis, consideration,

2. STANDARDIZATION PROCESS

2.1 Effective date: [] [Month/Year]: to be completed by Secretariat

2.2 Applicability date: [] [Month/Year]: to be completed by Secretariat

3. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION:

3.1 ICAO documentation:

Title	Type	Publication date
	Manual/Other Guidance Material/Web page	

3.2 External documentation:

Title	External Organization	Publication date

4. IMPLEMENTATION ASSISTANCE TASKS

Type	Global	Regional
[Seminar/Symposium/Workshop/etc.]		

**5. UNIVERSAL SECURITY AUDIT PROGRAMME (USAP)
OR UNIVERSAL SAFETY OVERSIGHT PROGRAMME
(USOAP)**

5.1 [No] [additional] protocol questions required under USAP [USOAP].