



ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 12: Facilitation Programmes

DOHA DECLARATION ON AIR TRANSPORT FACILITATION AND ANNEX 9 IMPLEMENTATION

(Presented by Qatar)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Facilitation Conference (FALC 2025) of April 2025 marked an unprecedented moment for the global air transport community, bringing Facilitation to the forefront of international aviation debate like never before. The Conference was followed by a Ministerial Segment that concluded with the adoption of the landmark **Doha Declaration on the Facilitation of International Air Transport**, which is a joint commitment to action by States, ICAO, international and regional organizations, the aviation industry, and all relevant stakeholders to give the necessary priority to Facilitation matters. It places equal importance on ensuring a safe, secure, sustainable air transport and the enhancement of the experience of all passengers, and the protection of the air travellers' rights. This balanced approach recognizes that operational excellence and a human-centric approach across the board must go hand in hand to build resilience, efficiency, and inclusiveness of international air travel.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- urge States to sustain the momentum generated by FALC 2025 and reaffirm their commitment to strengthening efforts toward full and effective compliance with Annex 9 — *Facilitation* provisions;
- invite all the States to recognize and support the Doha Declaration on the Facilitation of International Air Transport as an instrument to strengthen compliance with Annex 9;
- urge ICAO to develop practical guidelines to support States in effectively developing their oversight mechanisms for compliance with the provisions of Annex 9;
- request ICAO to assist States to enhance their National Air Transport Facilitation Programmes and National Air Transport Facilitation Committee to become practical tools for implementation, interoperability and monitoring;
- call upon States to increase their participation in facilitation meetings, as well as to intensify their participation in facilitation working groups; and
- urge States to enhance awareness of the importance of the interoperability of the stakeholders involved in the air transport as the only means to achieve efficiency.

<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Goal — Aviation Delivers Seamless, Accessible and Reliable Mobility for All.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	The ICAO activities referred in this paper can be undertaken within the 2026-2028 Regular Programme Budget and/or extra-budgetary contributions
<i>References:</i>	Doha Declaration on the Facilitation of International Air Transport Annex 9 — <i>Facilitation</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Annex 9 — *Facilitation* is the most comprehensive annex, both in the range of topics it addresses and the variety of stakeholders it involves. It provides a unique platform that brings together the appropriate stakeholders to resolve a wide array of issues, that could range from the use and processing of passenger information to enhance border security, to ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities throughout their journey, to protecting States and the aviation industry during communicable disease outbreaks and many more.

1.2 The 75th anniversary of Annex 9 brought unprecedented visibility to Facilitation, culminating in the adoption of the **Doha Declaration on the Facilitation of International Air Transport** during the High-level Ministerial Segment of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Facilitation Conference 2025 (FALC 2025) held in Doha, Qatar from 14 to 17 April 2025. During this milestone event, 52 ICAO Member States expressed their strong support and commitment to prioritizing Facilitation at the forefront of the aviation industry's agenda. We must now build on this momentum to drive concrete actions forward.

1.3 The same diversity that makes Annex 9 so valuable also introduces significant complexity in developing effective oversight mechanisms. Monitoring such a wide range of issues is undoubtedly challenging, but it is a necessary task that we must address with the appropriate level of priority.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Doha Declaration on the Facilitation of International Air Transport

2.1.1 The **Doha Declaration on the Facilitation of International Air Transport** represents a unified commitment by States, ICAO, international and regional organizations, the aviation industry, and all relevant stakeholders to prioritize Facilitation as a key pillar for the development of international air transport. It is now time for this commitment to be translated into concrete actions.

2.1.2 It calls ICAO Member States to prioritize the full implementation of Annex 9 Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) strengthen collaboration with border management authorities, and actively engage in ICAO facilitation bodies.

2.1.3 It encourages States to enhance accessibility, protect passenger rights, implement policies that support victims of aircraft accidents and their families, ratify the *Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules for International Carriage by Air* (Montréal Convention 1999) and address issues such as trafficking in persons and treatment of refugees.

2.1.4 It urges the Member States to promote the adoption of innovative technologies, support the ICAO Traveller Identification Programme (TRIP) Strategy and the ICAO Public Key Directory (PKD), and invest in the development of skilled, diverse facilitation professionals. Advancing digital transformation is key to improving efficiency and strengthening facilitation systems globally.

2.1.5 States also committed to integrating public health preparedness into their national aviation frameworks, ensuring alignment with World Health Organization International Health Regulations, as proactive planning will strengthen aviation's resilience and ability to respond effectively to future health emergencies.

2.2 Comprehensive compliance and monitoring of all SARPs of Annex 9

2.2.1 It is evident that certain SARPs in Annex 9 have, at times, gained increased visibility due to specific global contexts, for example, the health-related SARPs received unprecedented attention during the

COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is essential that States afford Annex 9 the same level of priority in its entirety as is typically given to other Annexes.

2.2.2 Similarly, certain provisions of Annex 9 have been incorporated into the Universal Security Audit Programme (USAP) and the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP), and this may have resulted in greater attention to those provisions.

2.2.3 As well, Annexes with a narrower scope may be easier to address in their entirety, while the broad and diverse coverage of Annex 9 makes achieving and monitoring full compliance more complex.

2.2.4 However, it is precisely this wide-ranging scope that underscores the vital importance of a comprehensive approach and full adherence to all SARPs under Annex 9, rather than focusing selectively on certain provisions. This will better position States to manage present and future challenges.

2.2.5 There is a need to establish a comprehensive and dedicated oversight mechanism at the national level. The National Air Transport Facilitation Committee (NATFC) serves as a key governance tool, however, NATFC should be supported operationally to enable the continuous monitoring of compliance with all aspects of Facilitation.

2.2.6 ICAO support is essential in providing guidance and sharing best practices on how continuous monitoring of Annex 9 compliance can be effectively implemented at the national level.

2.3 National Air Transport Facilitation Programmes (NATFP)

2.3.1 NATFP is a powerful tool that, when properly developed, enables meaningful engagement between the appropriate stakeholders supporting compliance with the SARPs of Annex 9. Its development and periodic updates should not be carried out in isolation, but rather through in-depth discussions among all relevant stakeholders. These discussions should focus on identifying the gaps between regulatory requirements, existing capabilities, and feasible actions within the State, ultimately guiding a practical and coordinated path forward.

2.3.2 ICAO guidance to States is paramount to ensure that the process of developing NATFP is done in a way that leads to the implementation of the SARPs of Annex 9.

2.3.3 From the Qatar experience, the Civil Aviation Authority – Facilitation Section is in charge of the coordination of the development, update and monitoring compliance of NATFP, and we have followed the following steps:

- a) Organize a series of general awareness sessions on Facilitation to all government agencies involved;
- b) Develop a tool where all government agencies could provide information on the compliance status related with their applicable SARPs;
- c) Implement workshop sessions with individual government agencies to discuss the reported level of compliance of their applicable SARPs, including the review of supporting evidence; and
- d) Regular reports to the National Air Transport Facilitation Committee, including agreed and proposed actions.

2.4 National Air Transport Facilitation Committee (NATFC)

2.4.1 NATFC serves as the ideal platform for the development, updating, and monitoring of NATFP and, by extension, compliance of the State with Annex 9. However, it is essential to establish a clear mechanism for how NATFC will carry out its responsibilities, along with ensuring it is granted with the appropriate

level of authority to do so effectively, considering the wide range of topics that are to be discussed within NATFC.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 States must reaffirm their commitment to strengthening efforts toward full and effective compliance with all the SARPs in Annex 9, and the importance of sustaining the momentum generated by FALC 2025.

3.2 The broad support expressed for the Doha Declaration on the Facilitation of International Air Transport as a key instrument to promote and enhance compliance with Annex 9 provisions must be considered as a recognition of the importance of bringing Facilitation at the top of the agenda of the aviation community.

3.3 ICAO should develop practical guidelines to support States in the development and strengthening of oversight mechanisms for Annex 9 compliance.

3.4 ICAO should assist States in enhancing their NATFP and Committees, with a view to making them effective tools for implementation, interoperability, and monitoring.

3.5 The importance of increased State participation in facilitation meetings and working groups is pivotal for advancing collaborative progress in the facilitation domain.

3.6 Stakeholder interoperability beyond coordination is a main principle in achieving efficient air transport facilitation, and the aviation community should commit to enhancing awareness and efforts in this area.

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