



WORKING PAPER

ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 21: Next Generation of Aviation Professionals (NGAP) Initiative

NEXT GENERATION OF AVIATION PROFESSIONALS

(Presented by South Africa)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Next Generation of Aviation Professionals programme, or NGAP, was established to ensure that the international air transport system have a sufficient supply of qualified and competent professionals to operate, manage, and maintain its future. The ICAO Assembly adopted Resolution A39-29, urging Member States to identify their long-term human resource needs and to develop strategies to attract, train, educate, and retain aviation professionals.

Some States, including South Africa, have made funds available to encourage and support youth in pursuing careers in aviation. This is done through various programmes including outreach programmes, bursaries, sponsorships, and trainee and learnership programmes. South Africa leverages off the partnerships with other Member States to build a suitable qualified skills pool over time to address not just the shortage of youth in aviation professions but also to simultaneously address the gender disparities that exist in the industry globally.

By encouraging more partnerships between governments and the private sector, ensuring the transferability of aviation careers globally, and taking advantage of technology to create awareness and attract the youth, the aviation community may register some progress in addressing the NAGP challenge.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a. Note the programmes being implemented in South Africa as a response to the NGAP challenges;
- b. Encourage partnerships between States and the private sector in building a pipeline of future aviators;
- c. Encourage sharing of best practices amongst Member States to contribute towards the success of NGAP initiatives; and
- d. Urge ICAO in collaboration with Member States to ensure that gender inequality is addressed and incorporated into all NGAP initiatives.

Strategic Goals:

This working paper relates to all Strategic Goals and High Priority enablers.

<i>Financial implications:</i>	This may require Member States to contribute in monetary terms, alternatively, to allow for secondments to give effect to practical experience and expertise in critical areas over and above the theoretical knowledge obtained from the relevant accredited education institutions.
<i>References:</i>	ICAO Assembly Resolution A39/29.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 A large portion of the current workforce is approaching retirement which highlights the urgent need to expand the skills pool amongst the youth.

1.2 Many professionals left the industry during the COVID-19 pandemic and have not returned whilst others sadly succumbed to the virus itself.

1.3 In many regions, access to affordable education and training remains a significant barrier.

1.4 Aviation is now competing with other sectors for highly skilled talent.

1.5 There is still a lack of harmonized competencies and qualifications across some aviation disciplines.

1.6 Many young people simply lack awareness of the wide range of exciting and meaningful careers that aviation can offer.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The aviation industry is aging and is in much need of youth to create continuous human resources pipeline, ensure business continuity, skills transfer.

2.2 The lack of interest by schoolers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects coupled by the historical background in accessing primary education in rural and previously disadvantaged communities.

2.3 The cost of aviation studies and trainings makes the pursuing careers in the aviation industry inaccessible to many learners coming from impoverished families.

2.4 The cost of building obtaining practical experience like flying hours is unaffordable to most young people aspiring to be commercial pilots and engineers. Partnerships with airlines, aircraft maintenance, designer and manufacturing organisation in supporting NGAP initiatives is, therefore, required.

2.5 There is a need to leverage on technology to attract more young people into the industry especially in light of the recent technological advancements in the industry.

2.6 The transferability of aviation qualifications between ICAO Member States must also be considered when addressing the shortage of youth in aviation professions.

3. SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION

3.1 South Africa celebrated 30 years of democracy in 2024 and yet the aviation industry still depicts a lack of representativity in the demographics of aviation professionals.

3.2 The impact of the historical political dispensation can be seen in many societal imbalances in the country and the aviation industry is no exception.

3.3 The aviation industry in South Africa does not reflect proportional representativity of demographics of the country. Whilst the world is addressing other challenges such as gender inequality, South Africa must deal with additional challenges regarding the lack retrospectivity on the basis of demographics in a number of industries such as aviation.

3.4 The challenges highlighted by the lack of youth in the aviation industry therefore carries with it many other variables that have given rise to a number of initiatives for the youth of South Africa.

3.5 The South African aviation entities initiated and developed an outreach programme, the Joint Aviation Awareness Programme, targeting young people at high school level in order to create awareness and promote careers in aviation.

3.6 The South African Government, each year, dedicates the International Civil Aviation Day (ICAD) celebration to bring aviation closer to the youth, particularly in previously disadvantaged communities. Through a range of targeted outreach activities, the country aims to raise awareness of the diverse career opportunities within the aviation sector. These activities reach in excess of 70 000 learners across the country annually.

3.7 These activities are supported by funding mechanisms in the form of bursaries, sponsorships, trainee programmes, and learnerships, amongst others.

3.8 South Africa also established STEM related programmes such as the iFlySTEM initiative that provides tutoring lessons to high school learners in Maths, Science and Technology subjects to further support the scarce skills pool in the industry.

3.9 To ensure a holistic approach, South Africa also leverages on these programmes to target women empowerment where female learners are considered over their male counterparts without lowering the standards.

3.10 South Africa is also leveraging off existing partnerships with Member States such as the People's Republic of China, the United Arab Emirates, France, and others to train and upskill young people in different aviation fields.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The saying that a country that doesn't invest in its youth will fail at solving its immediate and future problems rings true and is enough motivation to encourage Member States to support the NGAP.

4.2 Private Public Partnerships and funding institutions can make a bigger impact in addressing the shortage of youth in aviation professions.

4.3 The Assembly is therefore invited to take note of the action outlined in the Executive Summary.