



ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 12: Facilitation Programmes

HARMONIZING CREW TREATMENT STANDARDS WORLDWIDE — MAINTAINING
MOMENTUM IN THE NEXT TRIENNIUM

(Presented by the United States)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed inconsistencies in the treatment of air crew across jurisdictions, leading to unsafe or inhumane conditions, operational inefficiencies and market distortions. In response, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) 41st Assembly called for the development of harmonized international standards on crew treatment during public health emergencies. Since then, the Facilitation Panel (FALP), through its Working Group on Annex 9, has made considerable progress drafting new provisions and guidance material to improve global alignment. It is essential that the Assembly maintain focus on the issue and continue to support the advancement and implementation of consistent, humane and operationally sound approaches to crew treatment during international emergencies. This paper calls on States to continue to prioritize into the next triennium, recognizing the ongoing work of the FALP toward finalizing proposed crew treatment Standards and Recommended Practices during its next meeting in December 2025.

Action: The Assembly is invited to direct the Secretary General to continue to prioritize attention on harmonized crew treatment standards into the next triennium and encourage States to fully support the Facilitation Panel's work in this area.

<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Goal — Aviation Delivers Seamless, Accessible and Reliable Mobility for All
<i>Financial implications:</i>	N/A
<i>References:</i>	A41-WP/257, <i>Harmonizing Crew Treatment Standards Worldwide</i> Assembly 41 Report and Minutes Annex 9 — <i>Facilitation</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 During the COVID-19 pandemic, air crew around the world were subject to vastly divergent treatment by different States, often with little regard for their critical role in maintaining global air connectivity and the international supply chain.

1.2 These discrepancies led to burdensome operational impacts, jeopardized safety and crew welfare, and in some cases, obstructed carriers' ability to exercise bilateral air transport rights. Moreover, they increased operational costs and introduced distortions in competition between international carriers.

1.3 In recognition of these challenges, the 41st Assembly (A41) broadly endorsed the need for harmonized Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs), with more than 100 States supporting A41-WP/257, *Harmonizing Crew Treatment Standards Worldwide*.

1.4 To meet the need for SARPs, the Facilitation Panel (FALP) tasked the Working Group on Annex 9 (WGA9) to develop new provisions to address the issue. The work has advanced significantly and is on track for conclusion in December 2025.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 As air transport continues to surge, it is important to prepare for future international disruptions of any kind. The need for globally harmonized and humane air crew treatment standards remains as urgent as it was during the COVID-19 pandemic. Air crew professionals provide the backbone of international air operations, and their ability to perform safely and efficiently is directly linked to public safety and confidence, operational resilience and market fairness.

2.2 Disparities in crew treatment revealed during the COVID pandemic require continued multilateral action to ensure seamless international air travel even during global emergencies.

2.3 The FALP anticipated new SARPs directly address the need identified in A41 by codifying baseline expectations for humane and effective treatment of air crew under emergency conditions.

2.4 Since A41, WGA9 has made significant strides toward the development of new Standards and guidance aimed at safeguarding crew welfare during emergencies. This includes detailed proposals on facilitation procedures and temporary accommodation expectations.

2.5 While final adoption of these SARPs is pending, the consensus emerging from WGA9 underscores the feasibility and value of global harmonization of standards in crew treatment.

2.6 The United States commends FALP and WGA9 for their efforts and expresses support for the conclusion of this work by the end of 2025.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 As the world prepares for future global health and other emergencies affecting air transport, it is imperative that ICAO and its Member States institutionalize the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. Consistent and humane treatment of air crew is not only a matter of welfare, but also of operational resilience, fairness and market integrity.