



ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 12: Facilitation Programmes

IRREGULAR MIGRATION—THE EXPLOITATION OF NON-SCHEDULED OPERATORS
AND GENERAL AVIATION IN THE CARIBBEAN AND LATIN AMERICA

(Presented by Jamaica)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a rising trend of migrant smuggling through the use of non-scheduled operators and general aviation. These operations often occur on short notice and without passenger data, presenting a significant vulnerability to regional and national border security. Current International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) and guidance document should be reviewed and modified to include emerging best practices.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- consider requesting a collaborative multi-discipline task force with participation from experts from the Air Transport, Facilitation and Aviation Security Panels to review ICAO Doc 9626, *Manual on the Regulation of International Air Transport*, Annex 9 — *Facilitation* and any other relevant guidance material to strengthen the economic and regulatory framework regarding non-scheduled and general aviation in areas to include, but not limited to, the risk assessment and the expansion of Advanced Passenger Information/Passenger Name Record (API/PNR) requirements to include general aviation;
- encourage Member States to collaborate with other relevant Competent Authorities who are familiar with new and emerging threats related to human trafficking and irregular migration as part of their aviation security and border security risk assessments; and
- encourage increased collaboration among ICAO Member States regionally and globally to identify and tackle smuggling of migrants.

<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Goal <i>Aviation Delivers Seamless, Accessible and Reliable Mobility for All</i>
<i>Financial implications:</i>	TBD
<i>References:</i>	Doc 10171, <i>Manual on a Comprehensive Strategy for Combating Human Trafficking in the Aviation Sector</i> Circ 352, <i>Guidelines for Training Cabin Crew on Identifying and Responding to Trafficking in Persons</i> Doc 9626, <i>Manual on the Regulation of International Air Transport</i> CARICOM IMPACS <i>Critical Movement Alerts</i> (Jan 2024, Apr 2024, Nov 2024, Jan 2025) United Nations Security Council S/2024/704 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime <i>Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 At the 13th International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) North American, Central American and Caribbean (NACC)/South American (SAM) Regional Aviation Security and Facilitation Meeting held in Antigua and Barbuda in June 2025, a common concern within the Latin America and Caribbean Region, was in relation to a significant increase in unusual requests for overflight and landing permits by Non-Scheduled Operators transiting several regional states airspace. These requests often made on short notice exhibit flight patterns involving one directionally transit or technical stops often aligned with human trafficking and smuggling routes.

1.2 Jamaica informed the meeting that this evolving threat landscape and pattern led the Civil Aviation Authority to strengthen national and regional cooperation and implement enhanced risk assessment protocols.

1.3 The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) through its *Critical Movement Alerts* has since 2023, issued notifications to Member States and international partners regarding irregular migration trends. These involve nationals from the Caribbean, West Africa and Asia transiting South America and the Caribbean Islands using General Aviation and Non-Scheduled Operators.

1.4 This concern was further supported by the United Nations Panel of Experts established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2653 (2022) in their Final Report to the United Nations Security Council, which emphasized the role of air transport in transnational organized crime, particularly trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling. The Panel also investigated and reported on the movement of more than 47 000 migrants to Central America for onward illegal movement towards North America. Additionally highlighting that “*the smuggling of migrants is a complex, multilayered crime [involving] a web of actors, including ringleaders; counterfeiter; land, sea and air transporters.*”.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 While Doc 10171, *Manual on a Comprehensive Strategy for Combating Human Trafficking in the Aviation Sector* provides guidance on how to combat human trafficking on commercial flights and emphasizes the use of Advanced Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) systems by INTERPOL and National Law Enforcement to detect, identify and intercept potential victims of human traffickers, a notable gap exists. The rising trend of migrant smuggling through the use of Non-Scheduled Operators and General Aviation requires urgent regulatory attention. These operations frequently lack transparency, are submitted on short notice and fail to provide API and PNR data to the respective competent authorities prior to arrival of these aircraft into our airspace, presenting significant vulnerabilities to regional aviation and border security.

2.2 Through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Airport Communication project (AIRCOP), and in partnership with the World Customs Organization (WCO)/European Union (EU) – Colibri/CARICOM IMPACS project, Jamaica continues to collaborate with regional stakeholders to ensure that its airspace is not exploited for irregular migration. As a result, a procedural manual was updated to integrate a risk profile system designed to scrutinize applications from non-scheduled operators and validate the legitimacy and purpose of their proposed flight operations and general aviation landing permits.

2.3 The Latin America and Caribbean region remains a major hub for irregular migration, with all modes of transportation exploited posing increased risk to vulnerable populations, particularly women and children. Aviation is increasingly targeted due its speed, low detection rates and ability to move larger groups covertly. There is a pressing need to enhance oversight intelligence sharing and enforcement in aviation to combat these threats effectively.