



ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 12: Facilitation Programmes

**PROPOSALS FOR THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF THE FULFILMENT OF
OBLIGATIONS RELATING TO AIR TRANSPORT FACILITATION**

(Presented by Senegal)

This working paper underscores the role and importance of facilitation for the efficiency and sustainability of international air transport. It highlights ongoing and completed activities to promote the effective implementation of Annex 9 Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) for all relevant stakeholders.

Considering the need to create the conditions for “seamless, accessible and reliable mobility for all” in the context of a forecasted exponential increase in air traffic, the paper presents proposals aimed at supporting the actions of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and other international organizations and at enabling States and operational stakeholders to define prioritized strategic goals resulting in a significant improvement in the effective and continuous implementation of the Annex 9 — *Facilitation* provisions. These proposals relate specifically to the adoption of a Global Facilitation Plan similar to the Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP), Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP) and Global Aviation Security Plan (GASeP) the development of a voluntary self-assessment mechanism for SARPs implementation, and the regular convening of a global Facilitation Conference.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) recognize the need to continually improve the efficiency of cross-border movements of aircraft, passengers, crews and cargo, given the global air traffic forecasts for the coming years;
- b) request that ICAO coordinate a feasibility study and, if deemed necessary, develop a Global Facilitation Plan (GFALP) similar to the GANP, GASP and GASeP, identifying global priority areas and specific measures to enable the achievement of the established goals;
- c) request that ICAO consider developing a standardized framework enabling States to provide continuous monitoring (self-assessment) of effective implementation of the Annex 9 SARPs for the stakeholders in their territories. The framework could include, but would not be limited to, a protocol for assessing implementation levels, a digital reporting platform and guidance for their use; and
- d) recognize the need to promote and maintain high-level political commitment and, to this end, request that ICAO consider organizing an international Facilitation Conference (FALC) at regular intervals (at least one every three years) that would enable its objectives to be met considering available resources.

¹ French version provided by Senegal.

<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>	Regular budget 2026–2028 and/or through extra-budgetary contributions.
<i>References:</i>	<i>Consolidated statement of continuing ICAO policies related to facilitation</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Facilitation can be defined as a combination of measures and human and material resources designed to improve and optimize the movements of aircraft, crew members, passengers, goods, baggage, mail and in-flight supplies through airports while ensuring safety, security and compliance with the relevant international and national regulations. It aims to facilitate air navigation and movements through airports and across borders.

1.2 Facilitation occupies a prominent place in the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation (1944) and plays a decisive role in the efficiency and sustainability of international air transport. Additionally, 2024 was designated by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) as the Year of Facilitation, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of Annex 9 — *Facilitation*.

1.3 In accordance with its mandate, ICAO has developed the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) contained in Annex 9 to the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation as well as various guidance documents, providing Contracting States with harmonized specifications to facilitate their efficient implementation of SARPs. ICAO keeps SARPs updated through the Facilitation Panel and various working groups. It has also developed several training modules to develop the skills of personnel involved in the implementation of Annex 9, promoting effective implementation by all relevant stakeholders. To enhance the awareness of high-level leaders concerning the need to enhance the efficiency of cross-border movements of aeroplanes, passengers, crews and cargo, ICAO organized an international Conference including a Ministerial Segment leading to a Ministerial Declaration on Air Transport Facilitation (the *Doha Declaration*).

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The effective implementation of the SARPs of Annex 9 is essential for facilitating the clearance of aircraft, passengers/crew members and their baggage, cargo and mail, and for meeting the challenges posed by border control and airport processes while ensuring the efficiency of air transport operations.

2.2 It must be noted that one outcome of the various analytical reports on the universal audit programmes is that the implementation level of the relevant Annex 9 SARPs varies from one State to another and from one region to another.

2.3 The forecasts for global air traffic predict over 170 per cent growth in 2050 as compared to 2019 traffic levels, meaning the carriage of over 12 billion passengers. This exponential development will likely have a significant negative impact on the efficiency of international air transport if airport infrastructure capacity does not develop at the same rate, or if facilitation procedures are not improved to meet the requirements for more expeditious clearance of aircraft, passengers, crews and cargo.

2.4 Therefore, it has become an urgent priority to identify strategies for raising the awareness of all Contracting States and all stakeholders concerning the need to make air transport facilitation a priority and to commit to continuous efforts to constantly improve the effective implementation of all SARPs recognized as essential to the effectiveness of air transport. Initiatives should be identified individually by each relevant Contracting State and stakeholder, but they will be more effective if they are harmonized and supported by strategic actions and mechanisms developed under the aegis of ICAO. To this end, ICAO could be tasked with carrying out the required actions, including holding discussions in the relevant bodies, conducting a feasibility study regarding the adoption of a Global Facilitation Plan similar to the Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP), the Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP) and the Global Aviation Security Plan (GASeP), and organizing a worldwide Facilitation Conference (FALC) on a regular basis, and at least once every three years, in light of the success of the Conference organized by ICAO in Doha, Qatar in April 2025.

2.5 GASeP, GASP and GANP have been recognized as frameworks that are useful and relevant to varying degrees to many Member States and regional organizations for the identification of priorities and as a tool for advancing aviation safety and security. They have been used to help draft and adjust the regional and national aviation safety and security plans, as inspiration for regional roadmaps, and they are useful as advocacy tools. The Global Facilitation Plan proposed in this paper could play the same role as these plans in air transport facilitation. The plan should be strategically aligned with the ICAO Strategic Goal in Facilitation. Priority actions and a flexible mechanism for assessment and monitoring should be included in such a manner as to ensure that it does not become an additional, untenable burden for the ICAO Secretariat, while still attaining the intended strategic goals.

2.6 Beyond the Electronic Filing of Differences (EFOD) system and the Compliance Checklist (CC) associated with Annex 9, the development of a voluntary mechanism for the self-assessment of SARPs implementation could also support Contracting States' efforts to provide oversight in the area of facilitation. In fact, such a mechanism should enable States to ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of Annex 9 SARPs by the relevant national stakeholders and therefore continuous improvement thanks to the dynamic Corrective Action Plans to be established by the stakeholders (governments and other relevant entities) in line with their respective capacities.

2.7 Given the success and the impact of the global Facilitation Conference (FALC) organized by ICAO in Doha, Qatar) in April 2025, the regular organization of a similar event, at least once every three years, should enable a consistent level of awareness to be maintained among governmental decision-makers, thus enhancing the political commitment required for effective implementation of the Annex 9 SARPs.

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