



## ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

#### Agenda Item 12: Facilitation Programmes

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF A GLOBAL ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY AND UNIFORM REGULATIONS, STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

(Presented by the International Air Transport Association (IATA))

##### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The number of elderly and persons with disabilities makes up a significant and growing percentage of the world's population, and is increasing through population growth, medical advances and the ageing process. Aviation, like all other transport modes, needs to recognize and accommodate this growing passenger segment to reach a disability-inclusive air transport system.

Resolution A41-15: *Accessibility in International Civil Aviation*, adopted at the 41st Session of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Assembly in 2022, requested the Council to develop an effective strategy and work programme for passengers with disabilities and reduced mobility, aiming to achieve a disability-inclusive transport system in cooperation with all stakeholders. The Resolution also encouraged States to strive for uniformity in their transport accessibility regulations, standards and procedures.

**Actions:** The Assembly is invited to:

- recommend ICAO to ask States to strive for uniformity in their legislative design, actively involving industry stakeholders and persons with disabilities through their representative organization in the policymaking cycle; and
- encourage States to support the ICAO Working Group on Accessibility in International Civil Aviation and include representatives of the disability community.

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| <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> | It is not expected that there will be significant financial implications to ICAO, given this work can be developed by the existing working bodies.                                                                                       |
| <i>References:</i>             | United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities <sup>2</sup><br>Assembly Resolution A41-15: <i>Accessibility in International Civil Aviation</i><br>Doha Declaration on Facilitation of International Air Transport |

<sup>1</sup> Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish versions provided by the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/ConventionRightsPersonsWithDisabilities.aspx>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Assembly Resolution A41-15: *Accessibility in International Civil Aviation* mandated the ICAO Council to develop an effective strategy and work programme on accessibility for passengers with disabilities.

1.2 Recognizing the clear mandate of the General Assembly, a group of States from the ICAO Working Group on Accessibility in International Civil Aviation (WGAA) under the Facilitation Panel, and representatives from the aviation industry have drafted an outline of the accessibility strategic framework.

1.3 Further to the Council of ICAO designating 2024 as the Year of Facilitation (FAL2024), ICAO, jointly with Airports Council International (ACI) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA), conducted a very successful Symposium on Accessibility in International Civil Aviation on 2 and 3 December 2024.

1.4 Under the proposed theme “Inclusive and universally accessible Air Transport for Persons with Disabilities and Reduced Mobility”, the Accessibility Symposium addressed the facilitation of air transport for persons with disabilities and reduced mobility, as well as the challenges and efforts of States, industry, and other stakeholders to enhance international collaboration for practical solutions regarding accessibility. The Symposium also concluded that the involvement of persons with lived experience is key in accessibility decision-making processes, and they should be included in the ICAO WGAA.

1.5 The Ministerial Facilitation Conference held in April 2025, and the Doha Declaration on Facilitation of International Air Transport prioritized the inclusion and accessibility of air transport services to persons with visible and non-visible disabilities and reduced mobility by ensuring their involvement in decision-making processes, fostering data collection and sharing, and advancing personnel training, among other efforts to achieve a disability-inclusive air transport system.

1.6 The Doha Declaration aligns with other ICAO Long-Term Strategies, whose aim is to protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities, including freedom of movement.

## 2. THE NECESSITY TO ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES AND REINFORCE THE ICAO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK.

2.1 Over the past years, the existence of barriers capable of discouraging part of the population from travelling has been a matter of concern and has gradually given rise to national regulations aimed at overcoming those limitations to the practice of activities, including air transport, which should be accessible by law.

2.2 Without a clear, consistent and strategic global framework led by ICAO, regulations are fragmented and may not lay the necessary foundations to achieve accessible and universal air transport on a coordinated basis.

2.3 This fragmentation does not help passengers travel with peace of mind, nor does it facilitate the industry's consolidation of policies and processes, leaving room for interpretation by the experts responsible for the work.

2.4 Industries and States are dedicated to delivering seamless and cohesive accessible services throughout a passenger's journey. Through collaboration, we can enhance accessibility and guarantee that every traveller experiences a smooth and enjoyable process, as intended by all stakeholders involved.

2.5 Along these lines, IATA and ACI call on ICAO Member States to continue ensuring consistent design and application of regulations, working within the international cooperation framework to avoid inconsistent service delivery.

2.6 The ICAO WGAA has drafted a long-term disability strategy and collected a list of regulatory requirements in a compendium that encompasses policies and practices designed to ensure that individuals with disabilities can travel by air safely and comfortably, including access to services, accommodations and relevant information. The strategy is aimed to be presented for approval at the next meeting of the Facilitation Panel in December 2025.

### 3. **CONCLUSION**

3.1 The need of the hour from ICAO is a sound response to the call to action from passengers, industry and States in the accessibility field, harmoniously leading States, airlines, airports and passengers.

3.2 It is now time to continue bringing national efforts into the ICAO-guided regulatory working group, which will help address the patchwork of inconsistent accessibility regulations that already act as a barrier to making air travel a comfortable and positive experience for all.

3.3 For this, it is essential that the General Assembly urge ICAO and its Member States to continue supporting and further expand the work of WGAA, and to include representatives from the disability community, as well as deliver its strategy and work plan for accessible aviation.

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