



ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 12: Facilitation Programmes

UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY IN CIVIL AVIATION: PROPOSAL FOR A REGIONAL STRATEGY BASED ON THE EXPERIENCE OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

(Presented by the Dominican Republic and supported by 18 Latin American Civil Aviation Commission (LACAC) Member States²)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Universal accessibility is firmly established as a cross-cutting theme of sustainable development and of the human rights approach guiding global governance, particularly in strategic sectors such as air transport. Within the framework of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the obligation to ensure that all people, including those with disabilities or accessibility needs, can exercise their right to mobility in a safe, autonomous and dignified manner and without discrimination is one of the commitments undertaken by Member States.

This working paper presents a proposal for a regional strategy for the effective implementation of universal accessibility in civil aviation, based on the technical and regulatory experience acquired by the Dominican Republic. The proposal is based on existing international instruments, including the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Annex 9 — *Facilitation*, Resolution A41-15: *Accessibility in International Civil Aviation* and Doc 9984, *Manual on Access to Air Transport by Persons with Disabilities*.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) take note of the progress made by the Dominican Republic in terms of universal accessibility in civil aviation and its contribution to compliance with Annex 9;
- b) approve the proposal for a regional accessibility strategy aligned with current international standards and best practices;
- c) encourage Member States to establish technical units or focal points on accessibility within their aviation authorities;
- d) promote the permanent inclusion of accessibility issues in National Facilitation Committees and training programmes, and
- e) promote technical cooperation, the exchange of best practices and voluntary monitoring of progress in universal accessibility in civil aviation.

¹ Spanish version provided by Dominican Republic.

² Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

<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 expected that the actions derived from this proposal can be carried out with national resources or through regional and international technical cooperation, in coordination with ICAO business plans and with the support of strategic alliances established by the States within the framework of this initiative.
<i>References:</i>	Annex 9 — <i>Facilitation</i> Resolution A41-15: <i>Accessibility in International Civil Aviation</i> Doc 9984, <i>Manual on Access to Air Transport by Persons with Disabilities</i> . A41-WP/340, <i>Accessibility and universal design in air transport facilitation establishment of general guidelines and best practices relating to passengers with reduced mobility</i> .

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Universal accessibility and facilitation in air transport: a view from the region.

1.1.1 Universal accessibility is firmly established as a cross-cutting theme of sustainable development and of the human rights approach guiding global governance, particularly in strategic sectors such as air transport. Within the framework of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the obligation to ensure that all people, including those with disabilities or accessibility needs, can exercise their right to mobility in a safe, autonomous and dignified manner and without discrimination is one of the commitments undertaken by Member States.

1.1.2 In accordance with the reference documents cited, the Dominican Republic has adopted a national strategy to strengthen universal accessibility in civil aviation, with a special focus on facilitation procedures for people, aircraft, baggage, cargo and mail. This commitment has translated into concrete action, such as:

- a) the design and execution of training programmes on the basics of accessibility for all actors in the airport ecosystem;
- b) effective coordination by the National Facilitation Committee to ensure inter-institutional consistency in the application of standards; and
- c) the preparation of analyses, socialization plans and technical follow-up to Annex 9 — *Facilitation* from the standpoint of accessibility.

1.1.3 In a high-impact structural action, the Dominican Republic has taken a decisive step with the official creation of a Universal Accessibility and Universal Design Unit under the Civil Aviation Board. The terms of reference of this unit, which was conceived on the basis of the guidelines in Doc 9984, *Manual on Access to Air Transport by Persons with Disabilities*, Chapter 13, and the provisions of Annex 9, are to coordinate, oversee and provide technical support to accessibility procedures throughout the air transport

facilitation chain. Its creation reaffirms the Dominican State's commitment to more inclusive and efficient civil aviation, aligned with the principles of equity and non-discrimination.

2. INTERNATIONAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY IN CIVIL AVIATION

2.1 Implementation by the Dominican Republic.

2.1.1 All the progress made by the Dominican Republic in terms of training, institutional arrangements and cooperation is in line with this international regulatory framework. It is a model that combines legal, operational and educational elements, a formula that gives it legitimacy and efficiency, and it aims at further progress in the quality of service, the protection of fundamental rights, institutional sustainability and the continuous improvement of facilitation procedures.

3. CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE PROPOSING STATE

3.1 Institutional action to strengthen universal accessibility in air transportation.

3.1.1 The Dominican Republic has demonstrated a sustained commitment to the inclusion of persons with disabilities and accessibility needs in the civil aviation system, particularly in facilitation procedures. Based on a comprehensive and progressive vision, strategic action has been taken in direct response to the standards and recommendations of Annex 9, Resolution A41-15, *Accessibility in International Civil Aviation* and Doc 9984, implementing the following:

3.1.1.1 Creation of the Accessibility and Universal Design Unit.

3.1.1.1.1 In accordance with the recommendation of Doc 9984, Chapter 13, and as a technical response to the provisions of Annex 9 (8.23–8.41) and Resolution A41-15.

3.1.1.1.2 This unit has the following terms of reference:

- a) monitor compliance with international and national regulations on accessibility;
- b) provide technical support to the bodies comprising the National Facilitation Committee; and
- c) design and coordinate training strategies, awareness campaigns, technical evaluations and methodological assistance in accessibility.

3.1.1.2 Implementation of training programmes on the basics of accessibility.

3.1.1.2.1 Based on the provisions of Doc 9984, Chapter 2, the proposing State has designed and delivered training and awareness programmes for:

- a) airport personnel (operations, customer service, cleaning, land transport);
- b) migration, customs, airport security (CESAC) and airline authorities; and
- c) members of the National Facilitation Committee and other public bodies.

3.1.1.3 Inter-institutional coordination by the National Facilitation Committee.

3.1.1.3.1 The National Facilitation Committee, chaired by the Civil Aviation Board, has played an essential role in ensuring inter-institutional coordination and the advancement of a cross-cutting culture of accessibility. The Committee brings together:

- a) governmental bodies: IDAC, Migration, Customs, Passports, Tourism, Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Public Health, Environment, CESAC, FARD;
- b) representatives of the private sector (airlines, airports, tourism sector); and
- c) technical advisors and support agencies.

3.1.1.3.2 This body has had a key role in:

- a) coordinating training;
- b) disseminating the updated content of Annex 9;
- c) implementing socialization plans on accessibility; and
- d) incorporating accessibility considerations into migration, customs and security procedures.

3.1.1.3.3 The existence of the Committee, its multisectoral membership and its institutional backing confirm the proposing State's standing as a model of collaborative governance in accessible facilitation.

4. PROPOSAL FOR A REGIONAL STRATEGY

4.1 Towards accessible civil aviation throughout the region

4.1.1 Universal accessibility in air transport should not depend on a passenger's country of origin or destination. It is necessary to move towards a coordinated regional strategy that guarantees minimum conditions of accessibility, training and oversight in all ICAO Member States.

4.1.2 This proposal is submitted as a technical initiative and expression of solidarity by the proposing State, with the aim of furthering the effective implementation of Annex 9, compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the application of Resolution A41-15. Its content is based on the experience already acquired in the country and it is conceived as a model that can be adapted to each national situation.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 A commitment to dignity, inclusion and change in civil aviation

5.1.1 General conclusions

5.1.2 Universal accessibility in civil aviation can no longer be approached as an accessory or optional component of facilitation procedures. International instruments, the Convention on the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities, Annex 9, Resolution A41-15 and Doc 9984, constitute a robust framework that must be activated through ongoing, coordinated and measurable institutional action.

5.1.3 The experience of the proposing State demonstrates that it is possible to move steadily and gradually towards a more accessible air transport system. With the creation of a specialist technical unit, the implementation of training programmes and effective coordination by the National Facilitation Committee, practical steps have been taken to apply the principles of equity, dignity and safety.

5.2 “Inclusion in civil aviation is not a destination; it is the course we must chart together.”

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