



International Civil Aviation Organization

WORKING PAPER

A42-WP/672

P/38

25/9/25

(Information paper)

English only

ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

PLENARY

Agenda Item 8: Statements by delegations of Member States

STATEMENT BY DR VINOLIA K. SALESI, DIRECTOR OF CIVIL AVIATION, TONGA

(Presented by Tonga)

President of the Assembly

President of ICAO Council, Mr Salvatore Sciacchitano

Secretary General of the ICAO, Mr Juan Carlos Salazar

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga, I wish to express our sincere appreciation to ICAO for convening this 42nd Assembly and for its continued leadership in fostering a safe, secure, sustainable, and resilient global aviation system.

The aviation sector is one of the key economic enablers for Tonga. It provides vital connectivity to the world, supporting tourism, trade, and our broader socio-economic development. For this reason, Tonga is firmly committed to strengthening the resilience, safety, and efficiency of our aviation sector—not only for the benefit of our people, but also for the wider Pacific region.

Our vision is to build a robust aviation sector that connects Tonga domestically, regionally, and globally, while creating opportunities for our workforce to develop, thrive, and lead. We are equally focused on ensuring our regulatory frameworks are tailored to our unique context and capable of meeting both current and future demands. At the same time, we acknowledge that the continuous updates of ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs), while essential to global aviation safety, present ongoing challenges for Small Islands Development States (SIDS) like Tonga.

Tonga fully aligns with the ICAO Strategic Plan 2026–2050 and recognizes its critical importance as a long-term framework to guide collective efforts in shaping the future of international civil aviation. Allow me to highlight the areas central to Tonga's priorities.

1. Safety and Security Oversight

Safety and security are the cornerstones of civil aviation. Tonga is committed to strengthening its oversight capabilities in full alignment with ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices. Through targeted training, capacity-building initiatives, and close cooperation with the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO), we are enhancing safety management systems and security frameworks to ensure compliance and continuous improvement.

2. Environmental Sustainability

As a SIDS acutely vulnerable and at the forefront of the impacts of climate change, Tonga recognizes the urgency of reducing aviation's environmental footprint. We are committed to supporting ICAO's global environmental goals, including carbon-neutral growth. Through our State Action Plan, Tonga is advancing progressive measures to reduce emissions and build climate-resilient aviation infrastructure for future generations.

3. Innovation and Technology

The rapid evolution of aviation technologies presents both opportunities and responsibilities. Tonga supports ICAO's vision to harness digital aviation, data-driven oversight, and modernized air navigation services. We are progressively adopting these tools to improve operational efficiency, strengthen regulatory compliance, and ensure full alignment with ICAO SARPs.

4. Regional and Global Cooperation

No state can achieve aviation excellence in isolation. Tonga attaches the highest value to regional collaboration through PASO and bilateral partnerships. Such cooperation is essential for harmonizing regulations, sharing resources, and building resilience across the Pacific and beyond.

5. Capacity Building and Human Resources Development

People are the foundation of aviation sustainability. Tonga is dedicated to nurturing the next generation of aviation professionals, in line with ICAO's guidance. By prioritizing human resource development, we aim to ensure operational excellence, innovation, and resilience in our civil aviation sector.

Conclusion

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, the Kingdom of Tonga reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the ICAO Strategic Plan 2026–2050. We pledge to work hand-in-hand with ICAO, regional partners, and the global aviation community to advance our shared vision of a safe, secure, sustainable, and innovative international aviation system.

Tonga looks forward to constructive dialogue during this Assembly and to contributing to the collective progress of our sector over the next quarter-century.

Malo 'aupito – thank you.