



International Civil Aviation Organization

WORKING PAPER

A42-WP/675

P/40

26/9/25

(Information paper)

English only

ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

PLENARY

Agenda Item 8: Statements by delegations of Member States

STATEMENT BY SAINT LUCIA

(Presented by Ms. Janelle Modeste Stephen, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of
External Affairs, International Trade, Civil Aviation and Diaspora Affairs)

President of the Council, Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
Secretary-General, Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar,
Your Excellencies Ministers of Transport and/Civil Aviation,
Heads of Delegations,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Capacity Building in Aviation: Challenges and Opportunities for Saint Lucia

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Mr. President, on behalf of the Government and People of Saint Lucia, I wish to express my sincere gratitude for allowing me to present a brief statement before the 42nd Session of the ICAO Assembly.

1.2 Saint Lucia, like many Small Island Developing States (SIDS), faces unique challenges in the development and sustainability of its civil aviation sector. As an island nation heavily dependent on air-connectivity for economic development and social mobility, aviation is not simply an industry but our lifeline. The continued growth and resilience of our aviation system require consistent capacity building at both the institutional and human resource levels. However, the reality of limited financial, technical, and human resources presents certain difficulties and obstacles to the development of our aviation sector. There are four major challenges.

2. CHALLENGES

2.1 **Human Resource Limitations** - As a small state with a limited population base, Saint Lucia often struggles to attract and retain the specialized professionals required to sustain compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards. Migration, retirement and transition to other sectors of the economy, are among the factors which put pressure on the small pool available. These professionals are required mainly in air traffic management, safety, security and airworthiness oversight, along with airport operations.

2.2 **Financial Constraints** - Maintaining aviation compliance and oversight is costly. Saint Lucia must balance its aviation needs with other pressing national priorities such as health care, education and infrastructural development. As a result, we face difficulties in financing scholarships, training programs, and long-term professional development pathways for our aviation workforce.

2.3 **Institutional Sustainability** - Building institutions with enduring capacity remains a challenge. Saint Lucia's responsibility for regulatory oversight requires that our regional oversight body, the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority (ECCAA) be well resourced, in addition to Saint Lucia itself having its own cadre of trained individuals. Our small administrations are often overstretched, leading to gaps in implementation or delayed compliance with the standards and recommended practices (SARPs) of ICAO.

2.4 **Exposure to External Shocks** - As a tourism-dependent economy, Saint Lucia is particularly vulnerable to global crises that disrupt air transport. Although it may sound cliché, the COVID-19 pandemic, global fuel price volatility, and climate change have all caused setbacks in the island's aviation sector. These shocks have not only hindered recovery and growth but have also further constrained fiscal space, limiting the capacity for sustained investment in aviation.

3. OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES

3.1. Nonetheless, Saint Lucia has been able to address some of these challenges and obstacles with the support of ICAO and the generosity of a number of partner countries. Through initiatives of ICAO such as No Country Left Behind (NCLB) and the Technical Cooperation Programme— we have benefited from meaningful capacity development. The ICAO Technical Cooperation Bureau has been instrumental in mobilizing projects and technical expertise that would otherwise be out of reach for a small state like Saint Lucia. We are also deeply grateful for the invaluable technical assistance provided by the ICAO NACC Regional Office, which continues to strengthen Saint Lucia's aviation sector.

3.2. Saint Lucia also extends its profound gratitude to supportive Member States such as Singapore, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, and the Republic of Korea, as well as to the Republic of China (Taiwan), a non-member of ICAO, which has generously provided valuable academic and technical training.

3.3. With reference to the Republic of China (Taiwan), it is important that this 42nd Session of the ICAO Assembly considers the status of the Republic of China (Taiwan), particularly in the context of some of the areas of focus of this session – safety, sustainability and geopolitical issues.

3.4. Saint Lucia firmly underscores the importance of the Taipei Flight Information Region (FIR) as a vital hub linking Northeast and Southeast Asia. In the spirit of cooperation and inclusivity, we encourage ICAO to facilitate the meaningful participation of the Taiwan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)

in its Assemblies and related activities, thereby strengthening collaboration for safer, more secure, and sustainable skies worldwide.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1. Saint Lucia remains genuinely appreciative of the assistance it has received with regard to its capacity building and is determined to maximize its impact. Capacity building must translate into institutional strengthening, succession planning, and a sustainable framework that allows our aviation sector to thrive independently. To this end, Saint Lucia is committed to:

- Expanding the Pool of Trained Professionals – by encouraging more young people to pursue aviation studies through scholarships, mentorships, and collaboration with partner states and institutions.
- Strengthening Institutional Frameworks – by embedding best practices gained from international training into our national aviation system.
- Maximizing Regional Collaboration – by sharing experiences and resources with other Caribbean states to leverage economies of scale and collective resilience.
- Promoting Innovation and Digitalization – by integrating modern technologies into aviation oversight, data management, and training methodologies to overcome resource limitations.

4.2. Saint Lucia reaffirms its dedication to ICAO's global mission, the principles of the No Country Left Behind initiative, and the continued pursuit of capacity building as a cornerstone of aviation safety, security, economic oversight and sustainability.

With sincere thanks!

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