



ICAO

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North American, Central American and Caribbean Office

WORKING PAPER

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**Fourteenth Meeting of the North American, Central American and Caribbean
Directors of Civil Aviation (NACC/DCA/14)
St. George's, Antigua and Barbuda, 1 to 5 June 2026**

Agenda Item 11: Other Business

**ENHANCING INCLUSIVE AND STRATEGIC PARTICIPATION OF ALL STATES IN ICAO MEETINGS IN
SUPPORT OF THE NO COUNTRY LEFT BEHIND (NCLB) INITIATIVE**

(Presented by Canada)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This working paper invites ICAO and States to consider opportunities to enhance the inclusivity, effectiveness and strategic functioning of all meetings, consistent with the objectives of the NCLB initiative. While NCLB has traditionally focused on capacity-building and financial assistance, this paper highlights the importance of strategic and structural inclusivity at ICAO meetings, particularly in how States are enabled to engage meaningfully in the development of Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) and related guidance. The paper proposes that ICAO, and States, explore options to reduce barriers to participation across all levels of ICAO meetings, better accommodate varying State capacities, and ensure that a broader diversity of State perspectives contributes to improved global aviation outcomes.

Action:	Under Section 4
<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No Country Left Behind

1 Background

1.1 ICAO meetings play a critical role in developing and maintaining the global aviation regulatory framework, including the 19 Annexes to the Chicago Convention. Effective participation by all States in these bodies is essential to ensure that SARPs are practical, implementable, and reflective of the operational realities of all States and regions.

1.2 While the NCLB initiative reflects ICAO's strong commitment to supporting all States in achieving effective implementation, a growing number of States have noted that barriers to participation in SARP development and amendment processes may constrain the ability of some States, particularly small, developing, or resource-constrained States, to contribute fully and meaningfully to outcomes.

1.3 Meaningful participation in ICAO meetings often requires sustained financial, human, and technical investment. For many States, these demands are intensified where officials manage multiple portfolios across several Annexes, meetings require frequent or prolonged in-person attendance, meeting schedules are closely clustered, travel costs are high, or opportunities for effective virtual or hybrid participation are limited. Taken together, these challenges can significantly affect the capacity of some States to engage consistently at ICAO's meetings.

1.4 As a result, States are increasingly concerned that technical discussions may be shaped primarily by a smaller number of well-resourced or consistently present States, while others engage only at higher-level forums such as the Assembly. This dynamic may unintentionally narrow the range of perspectives informing technical outputs and limit the reflection of diverse regional and operational realities.

2 Discussion

Inclusivity as a Strategic Perspective

2.1 This working paper proposes that inclusivity within ICAO meetings be viewed more holistically and not solely through a resources lens, but also as an effectiveness issue. Inclusive participation supports more robust and practicable SARPs, as they are informed by a broader cross-section of States with diverse implementation environments, earlier identification of implementation challenges, and greater ownership by States and improved global compliance.

2.2 Currently there is a perceived disconnect between the principles of the NCLB initiative and some practices, including limited remote and virtual participation options, hosting meetings in high-cost locations, intensive meeting schedules across multiple Annexes and inconsistent use of regional structures, such as ICAO regional offices, to support effective engagement.

Participation Costs Considerations

2.3 In reflecting on ways to enhance participation and engagement, States may wish to consider the full range of costs and longer-term implications associated with hosting meetings. Hosting responsibilities typically extend beyond providing a venue and may include significant expenditures related to audiovisual and interpretation services, information technology support, meeting facilities, catering and hospitality services, transportation, and where applicable, social events. When viewed collectively, these demands can represent a substantial financial and administrative commitment for host States. Over time, such costs may influence a State's capacity or willingness to offer to host meetings, particularly when resources are constrained.

2.4 To preserve inclusivity, fairness, and predictability, and to ensure that all States are able to participate on an equal footing, we may wish to consider whether current approaches to hosting appropriately account for these realities and distribute hosting responsibilities in a way that is sustainable and equitable over the long term.

Opportunities to Enhance Engagement and Reduce Burden

2.5 There are a number of options in which ICAO, and States that host meetings, could explore to better align their planning with NCLB objectives, including the greater use of remote or hybrid working arrangements for meetings, conducting substantive technical work intersessionally using digital or cloud-based means, enabling in-person meetings to focus on decision-making and consensus-building, more structured planning of meeting mandates (especially in advance of the meetings themselves), timelines and outputs that support efficient State engagement and extending time between meetings where operationally feasible.

2.6 ICAO and Member States could also consider adopting a rotational approach to hosting meetings across different ICAO regions, thereby broadening opportunities for participation and supporting more equitable geographic access. By periodically convening meetings in various parts of the world, States and stakeholders with limited travel resources may be able to engage more directly in the work of ICAO, at least intermittently. Such rotational hosting could strengthen regional perspectives within global discussions, promote greater diversity of views, and foster deeper understanding of operational realities across regions, contributing to more inclusive and representative outcomes.

2.7 These approaches may be particularly beneficial for States with limited human resources, enabling them to prioritize engagement based on national needs while still contributing to global outcomes.

Regional and Inter-State Cooperation

2.8 Greater use of regional and inter-State cooperation may further support inclusive and effective participation in ICAO's technical work. States with the capacity to engage more consistently in ICAO meetings can play a constructive partnership role, where appropriate, by working closely with other States in their region or with similar operational realities to help reflect shared perspectives in technical discussions. Such collaboration may include informal coordination prior to meetings, information-sharing, or raising regionally agreed considerations when some States are unable to attend in person or remotely.

2.9 Encouraging these cooperative partnership-based approaches could help ensure that a wider range of State experiences and implementation realities are taken into account, while fully respecting State sovereignty and individual decision-making authority.

3 Conclusion

3.1 Ensuring that all States can engage meaningfully in ICAO's technical work is fundamental to the credibility, effectiveness and sustainability of the global aviation system.

3.2 Aligning ICAO's internal working methods, as well as those of States, more closely with the principles of the NCLB initiative, across all ICAO meetings, would help ensure that diverse State perspectives inform SARPs development, and that implementation challenges are addressed early and collaboratively, strengthening the collective success of the global aviation system.

4 Action by the Meeting

4.1 ICAO and States are invited to:

- a) Recognize the impact of State resource constraints, including human and financial limitations, on participation in ICAO meetings, and the implications for achieving ICAO's strategic objectives and the NCLB initiative;
- b) Invite the Secretariat to explore options to enhance inclusive, flexible and strategic engagement of all States in ICAO meetings, including consideration of meeting formats, locations, scheduling, and use of remote or hybrid participation; and
- c) Consider how regional structures, inter-State cooperation, and engagement with other relevant fora may support more effective participation and improved SARP outcomes.

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