



ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION

TECHNICAL COMMISSION

Agenda Item 31: Aviation Safety and Air Navigation Standardization

UPPER AGE LIMIT FOR PILOTS

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under Annex 1 — *Personnel Licensing* of the Chicago Convention, a “Contracting State, having issued pilot licences, shall not permit the holders thereof to act as pilot of an aircraft engaged in international commercial air transport operations if the licence holders have attained their 60th birthday or, in the case of operations with more than one pilot, their 65th birthday.”

Prior to the pandemic, shortages of skilled labor had already been identified as a potential constraint on the long-term development of the aviation sector. As the sector rebuilds from COVID-19 it is apparent that human resource constraints also have the potential to delay the short-term recovery.

Increasing life expectancy and the continued reduction in flight incapacitation risk mean that it is timely to review the Annex 1 limitations to ensure that they are up-to-date and do not constitute an unnecessary barrier to pilot employment.

Action: The Assembly is invited to request that ICAO, utilizing industry contribution, assess the latest scientific evidence relating to commercial multi-crew pilot age restrictions.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to the Safety and Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency Strategic Objectives
<i>Financial implications:</i>	Minimal: will be supported by industry.
<i>References:</i>	HLCC 2021-WP/251 Doc 10160, <i>High-level Conference on COVID-19. Report</i>

¹ English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish versions provided by IATA.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 An upper limit on pilot age limitation was first introduced by the International Commission for Air Navigation (ICAN) in 1919 and was set at 45 years old, a limit maintained by ICAO when it came into being in 1947. In 1963, a Recommendation was adopted with an age limit of 60 for the Pilot In Command (PIC) with no mention of the co-pilot. In 1978, an upper limit of 60 became a Standard for the PIC, and a Recommendation for co-pilots.

1.2 The current upper age limit in Annex 1 of 65 for both the PIC and co-pilot has been applicable since November 2006. This most recent increase was based on several studies, including the outcome of extensive simulator studies completed in 1984². These studies showed that the risk to the safe operation of an aircraft associated with subtle pilot incapacitation at a critical stage of flight was very low.

1.3 The continued upward trend in life expectancy, associated with a decline in the likelihood of sudden pilot incapacitation, together with extensive pilot incapacitation awareness training, the use of modern simulators to train and assess pilots' performance and the increase and availability of flight deck automation are expected to have further reduced the residual risk of pilot incapacitation.

1.4 The forced curtailment of license privileges is applied despite a requirement for pilots to continue to pass the rigorous medical and simulator assessments, right up until the day before their 65th birthday. Moreover, this age limitation does not apply to domestic aviation and in many States air transport pilots (multi-crew) are permitted to operate domestic flights beyond the age of 65.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The limited availability of skilled aviation staff currently represents a constraint on the ability of the aviation sector to recover following the pandemic. This is line with a longer-term concern dating back to before COVID-19 that shortages of pilots and other skilled staff could restrict the ability of the sector to meet the doubling of demand that was forecast for the next 20 years.

2.2 With demand for air travel anticipated to return to 2019 traffic levels in 2023 and then continue on an upward growth path the demand for commercial pilots is expected to exceed supply. It is therefore timely to revisit legacy age limitation requirements to ensure that they remain fit for purpose, do not represent an unjustified barrier to employment for these critical workers and do constitute *de facto* age discrimination.

3. ACTIONS

3.1 The Assembly is invited to request that ICAO, utilizing industry contribution, assess the latest scientific evidence relating to commercial multi-crew pilot age restrictions.

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² Chapman, P.J., "The consequences of in-flight incapacitation in civil aviation," Aviation, Space, and Environmental Medicine, June 1984, Vol. 55, No. 6, pp. 497-500