



WORKING PAPER

ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 12: Outcomes of High-level Conference on COVID-19

**FACILITATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL
AVIATION BEYOND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

(Presented by Australia)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ICAO and Member States need to maintain the momentum of the ICAO Council's Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) advice, recommendations and guidance, to establish a stronger global facilitation framework supporting a globally consistent aviation response by States and industry to future global health crises. This was recognized in both the Ministerial Declaration and the Conference recommendations at the High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021) convened in October 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for improved understanding and implementation of Annex 9 – *Facilitation* obligations by many States. Some States may require direct support from ICAO and other States to help implement many of the Annex 9 SARPs and related COVID-19 response initiatives. The Assembly is invited to consider recommendations put forward in this regard, which are of high importance to all, and in particular developing member states.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) request that ICAO progress as a priority HLCC 2021 recommendations and actions aimed at developing a crisis response framework for future health related crises drawing on the recommendations and guidance and advice developed by CART;
- b) encourage States to implement the relevant HLCC 2021 recommendations and actions aimed at strengthening national response planning, coordination and management arrangements in preparation for future pandemics or health crises; and
- c) request ICAO to assist developing Member States directly, and promote cooperation between States and with industry, to assist with the implementation of ICAO Annex 9 SARP's and related COVID-19 recovery initiatives.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to all Strategic Objectives.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	Not Applicable
<i>References:</i>	Annex 9 – <i>Facilitation</i> to the Chicago Convention Doc 10160, <i>High-level Conference on COVID-19 (Montréal, 12 to 22 October) Report</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The recovery in global aviation activity is gathering momentum, as vaccination coverage continues to increase and States review and gradually remove the many health protection measures they originally introduced in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, to reduce the risk from COVID-19 to travellers, aviation staff and the community, and that helped with management of national health systems.

1.2 The ICAO Council's Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART), rapidly brought together and worked with key stakeholders from the aviation industry (e.g. Airports Council International (ACI) and International Air Transport Association (IATA)) and with the UN World Health Organization (WHO), to develop timely advice, recommendations and guidance material to support Member States respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.3 The initial focus of CART was on assisting industry and governments make decisions about responding to the impacts on aviation of the spreading global COVID-19 pandemic. Over the later phases of its work, CART focused on establishing the consistent framework and tools needed to support decisions by industry and governments in planning for the recovery of international aviation.

1.4 ICAO and Member States need to maintain this momentum by drawing on CART recommendations and guidance, to ensure that an enduring and strengthened global facilitation framework is established which can support a more agile, globally consistent and timely response by States and industry to future global pandemics or other health crises.

1.5 This phase of work necessitates increased focus on the Annex 9 – *Facilitation* Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) and aviation COVID-19 health-related initiatives, including improving the availability of passenger health data; vaccination and testing certification; and progressive digitisation of international travel documentation to enhance safe and efficient international travel.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The ICAO High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021) convened in October 2021, recognized in both the Ministerial Declaration and the Conference recommendations, the need to implement a framework and measures to support member States better respond to future health crises. Many of the final HLCC recommendations fall into two categories.

2.2 The first group of recommendations identifies actions for individual States to undertake to improve effective coordination and harmonization at a national level between State authorities with responsibility for the management of pandemics and disaster response (e.g. via a National Air Transport Facilitation Committee envisioned in Annex 9), in consultation with industry.

2.3 The second group of recommendations is aimed at action by ICAO to strengthen international frameworks and systems to ensure interoperable long-term solutions are put in place (e.g. for digital travel documents and health-related credentials established by States), with a cognizance that the international travel environment will need to continue to use both digital and paper-based documentation.

2.4 The overarching aim of providing practical, aligned guidance to governments and industry operators to support the international air transport sector manage, respond to, and plan recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 on a globally consistent basis has been achieved through the phased work of CART.

2.5 It is now important that ICAO, Member States and industry, review the lessons learned from the more than two years of the COVID-19 pandemic to build back better through development of a

future risk-based crisis management framework reflecting the extensive CART advice, recommendations and guidance developed over the last two years.

2.6 The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for an improved understanding and implementation of Annex 9 obligations by many States. This needs to be addressed as a matter of priority to help all States participate in the recovery from COVID-19 and in responding to future global, regional and national pandemics.

2.7 It is important to acknowledge that ICAO Member States around the world can be at different stages of response or recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.8 Limited access to resourcing for some States may require direct support from ICAO and other States to help implement many of the Annex 9 SARPs and related COVID-19 response initiatives, such as the increased use of digital facilitation platforms and travel documentation envisioned in the ICAO Traveller Identification Programme (ICAO TRIP) Strategy.

2.9 The economic, social and connectivity benefits of aviation are critical for all ICAO States, making it essential that all ICAO States have the opportunity to access growing demand following the safe and efficient return of increased international air passenger and freight transport, as global aviation activity continues its recovery from the pandemic.

2.10 With respect to future facilitation improvements to help ensure a stronger global framework is established to support States and industry respond effectively to future global pandemics and other health crises, a number of recommendations are proposed for consideration by the Assembly.

3. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

3.1 The Assembly is invited to:

- a) request that ICAO progress as a priority HLCC 2021 recommendations and actions aimed at developing a crisis response framework for future health related crises drawing on the recommendations and guidance and advice developed by CART;
- b) encourage States to implement the relevant HLCC 2021 recommendations and actions aimed at strengthening national response planning, coordination and management arrangements in preparation for future pandemics or health crises; and
- c) request ICAO to assist developing Member States directly, and promote cooperation between States and with industry, to assist with the implementation of ICAO Annex 9 – *Facilitation* SARP's and related COVID-19 recovery initiatives.

— END —