ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 26: ICAO Civil Aviation Training and Capacity Building

ATTRACTING AND DEVELOPING THE AVIATION ECOSYSTEM'S WORKFORCE TO ENSURE THE INDUSTRY'S LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

(Presented by Airports Council International (ACI), International Federation of Air Line Pilots Associations (IFALPA), International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers Associations (IFATCA), United Nations International Labour Organization (ILO), International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), International Coordinating Council of Aerospace Industries Association (ICCAIA), The International Air Cargo Association (TIACA) and Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO))

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aviation ecosystem is reliant on a large and diverse workforce of well-trained and competent individuals. The number of workers who had to leave the industry throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and the so called "Great Resignation" had significant impacts on the availability of adequate numbers of aviation workers to meet the increasing demand as traffic recovers. The sector's industry and workers are signalling that swift actions are needed to ensure recruitment and retention of sufficient and diverse personnel to meet future demand and the long-term social sustainability and attractiveness of the aviation sector for the next generation of workers.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:
Request ICAO to:
  a) Work with States, International Organizations and Industry to monitor the evolving workforce situation for risks to recovery as well as catering to future demand, and identify strategies and actions that can be taken to mitigate the impact;
  b) Work with States, International Organizations and Industry to support professional development programmes, technical onboarding and communication programmes for younger generations and other initiatitives that will increase the attractivity of the aviation sector for the next generation of aviation personnel; and
  c) Work with States, International Organizations and Industry to combat the effects of the pandemic and cooperate through joint activities, including research, technical meetings, training, and advisory services, to build a socially sustainable recovery and decent work[2] in the sector.
Request Member States to:
  a) In consultation with Industry and workers, enhance collaboration with Ministries of Education and Employment by identifying future skill gaps, including technical and higher education aviation programmes, as part of the broader national education policies;

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[1] English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish versions provided by ACI.
[2] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm

	b) Support collaboration between educational institutions and industry on a national and local basis to develop skills labs and other forms of aviation training institutes; and c) Take the necessary measures to ensure the recruitment and retention of adequate numbers of aviation workers, a prerequisite of a safe, secure, fair and socially sustainable, efficient, economically viable, and environmentally sound air transport system which effectively supports local and global economies.
Strategic Objectives:	This working paper relates to the Strategic Objectives of *Safety, Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency,* and *Economic Development of Air Transport*
Financial implications:	N/A
References:	A39-29 Next Generation of Aviation Professionals A39-25 Aviation's contribution towards the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   The aviation ecosystem is strongly reliant on the availability of a large workforce of well trained and competent professionals in adequate numbers to cater to the diverse roles found across the sector. This diverse workforce ensures the delivery of a multitude of services required to make the aviation system function on a day-to-day basis across all regions of the world. The availability of this workforce is critical to ensure that the now increasing demand in aircraft movements can be accommodated.

1.2   On a global level, according to the Air Transport Action Group *Aviation: Benefits Beyond Borders* 2020 report, aviation accounts directly for 11.3 million jobs, many of which have a direct impact on ensuring safe and efficient operations across the aviation ecosystem. The aviation system supports indirectly over 18 million other jobs through the air transport industry's purchase of goods and services. From an economic perspective, in 2019, inbound tourists by air spent a combined US$ 850 billion and the income generated from air cargo exports in the same time frame was US$ 6.4 trillion. In the case of air cargo, this amount represents approximately 35% on global trade by value. The direct impact of a strong, vibrant and thriving aviation system on the economic wellbeing and sustainability of these communities is immense.

1.3   The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated drop in traffic had an unprecedented impact on the aviation ecosystem's workforce, exacerbating previous systemic challenges, with impacts such as large numbers of personnel being made redundant, being put on long-term furlough or asked to take early retirement schemes. This has created a gap in knowledge through the loss of experienced personnel, a leakage of skilled labour to other industries, and most recently a significant challenge in recruitment as demand comes back into the aviation system. These challenges are placing the effective industry recovery at risk, with events such as air operators having to cancel flights or long delays being generated at passenger touchpoints in airports. These are adding stress to the transport process at a time when it is important to restore public confidence in aviation.

1.4   The instability in employment in aviation generated by unpredictable traffic patterns due to the wide variety of health measures and travel restrictions implemented by States has equally had a significant impact on aviation's attractiveness as an employer. In addition, the ongoing debate around the environmental sustainability of the aviation system has further impacted the decision not to choose aviation as a career path, particularly for the next generation of professionals.

2.   DISCUSSION

2.1   During the 39th Assembly in 2016, Resolution A39-29: Next Generation of Aviation Professionals was passed. This resolution recognized that "in order to support growing aviation needs and

ensure the safe and efficient operation of the air transportation system, qualified and competent aviation professionals, as well as a diverse aviation workforce, are required." It went on to consider that "to meet current and future human resources needs, it is important for States and industry to engage the next generation of aviation professionals." These core references identified in 2016 are even more critical in 2022.

2.2   The 39th Assembly also passed Resolution A39-25: Aviation's contribution towards the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, urged "Member States to recognize the significant contributions of aviation to sustainable development realized by stimulating employment, trade, tourism and other areas of economic development at the national, regional and global levels, as well as by facilitating humanitarian and disaster response to crises and public health emergencies." This core aspect of the resolution would not be possible without a strong aviation workforce.

2.3   Resolution A39-25 equally recalled that "the scale and ambition of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development call for a global partnership that will bring together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors to mobilize all available resources for its implementation." Aviation stakeholders and States will have to attend this call, by recognising the importance of promoting employment within the aviation ecosystem respectful of the International Labour Organization's (ILO) fundamental principles, rights at work, and Standards.

2.4   On 15 March 2022, ICAO and ILO renewed their commitment to "Deliver as One" by signing a Cooperation Agreement to strengthen decent work in the aviation sector. The four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda – employment creation, social protection, rights at work, and social dialogue – became integral elements of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the UN General Assembly in 2015. Furthermore, the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work establishes that there is a joint responsibility between governments and social partners for ensuring the acquisition of skills, competencies and qualifications for all workers.

2.5   Many of the core aviation jobs are highly skilled professional roles that require significant amounts of investments to train candidates and bring them up to the required levels of skill and competence. These tend to be well-paid and highly sought-after roles but are not accessible to all individuals. There is however a significant portion of the aviation ecosystem's jobs that require lower levels of training and qualifications, and may tend to have less job security and lower levels of remuneration, but that are equally as important for the industry. These jobs, such as check-in and gate agents, baggage handlers, ground operations agents, airfield maintenance, and many more, found across the different sectors of activity, need to have equivalent terms and conditions to similar jobs in other sectors, and be recognised and understood for the critical support they provide to aviation as a whole.

2.6   Aviation plays a critical role in the sustainable development of communities and the connectivity of people, which remains of utmost importance for the economic, social, and territorial cohesion of Member States and their populations. To preserve this connectivity and important role within the economic fibre of nations and communities, the aviation industry has to come together and rethink the existing approaches that are leveraged to recruit, motivate, train, upskill, and retain its workforce.

2.7   Long-term and continuing labour shortages have been and may continue to affect some sectors. Industry, workers and their organizations, Member State authorities, and educational or training institutions should cooperate in developing the training systems needed to help safeguard employment security in civil aviation. Appropriate training systems and facilities are of great importance in order to provide the recurrent training required for personnel to maintain their levels of competence, the transitional training necessary to enable them to qualify on new equipment or procedures, and the training required for future redeployment.

2.8   The accelerated rate of innovation, introduction of new technologies, and automation are other chanllenges the industry will have to face. Partnerships with universities or technical institutes can allow for and support the needed upskilling of the workforce. In addition, the establishment of aviation programs adapted to younger-age populations, such as high schools or pre-university schools, creates additional visibility and understanding of aviation for the next generation of workers. These types of partnerships between industry and education institutions, ideally supported by State policies, will grow the visibility of and generate interest in the industry and its attractivity as a career path.

2.9   Ensuring that sustainability becomes embedded in the core of strategic plans and future investments across the industry and that policies and strategies developed by States support the industry's sustainability transition will equally provide for a more attractive sector for the younger generations looking to join organisations that embrace a sustainable future. Creating an attractive, diverse, and inclusive industry needs to be forefront in the agenda of States and industry stakeholders. Overall, the respect of ILO's fundamental principles and rights at work as well as the promotion of social dialogue between States, workers, and industry are also required to support a common understanding of these core aspects.

2.10   As the workforce's requirements and expectations continue to evolve and aviation professionals seek opportunities across different sectors or in different States, facilitating the workforce's global mobility is becoming a new challenge. Mutual recognition of training certificates, industry designations, and validation of competencies across States, as well as accelerated security vetting processes, while maintaining high levels of safety and security oversight, will facilitate the integration of workers into new environments in a faster and more seamless manner.

2.11   The ICAO Next Generation of Aviation Professionals Programme seeks to ensure that enough qualified and competent aviation professionals are available to operate, manage, and maintain the future international air transport system. This programme was developed to meet the challenges that were identified at its inception. However, as industry and workforce challenges have evolved over the years, the programme must evolve to rise to these new challenges. ICAO's mobilization of the aviation community to accelerate gender equality through the 2018 Gender Aviation Summit should be sustained.

2.12   It is of utmost importance that States and ICAO provide ongoing support to these programmes of gender empowerment initiatives and other aviation professional development programmes, including those run by the industry, to ensure future succession and attraction of the next generation of aviation professionals, both for the highly skilled and less skilled workers. In order to Deliver as One, these efforts should be carried out in close or joint collaboration with other international organizations, including ILO, to maximize efficiencies and provide value to Member States and industry.

3.   **CONCLUSION**

3.1   The current labour market is challenging aviation's scalability not only as traffic returns, but also in the longer term as operations continue to increase. The aviation ecosystem's capacity to meet the continually increasing demand in passenger, cargo, and aircraft movements will require the availability of adequate numbers of skilled and competent aviation workers filling a multitude of roles across different sectors.

3.2   Recognising the equal importance of the highly-skilled and less-skilled workers that make up the fibre of the aviation ecosystem and ensuring sufficient levels of recruitment, retention, and ongoing development of staff within the aviation system is critical for the long-term sustainability and resilience of the industry.

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