



ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 17: Environmental Protection – International Aviation and Climate Change

**THE SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT OF A SUSTAINABLE AVIATION INDUSTRY NEEDS A JUST TRANSITION TO A ZERO CARBON FUTURE**

(Presented by International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF))

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This working paper highlights that an effective and successful green transition process of the global aviation industry should ensure a just transition. The decarbonisation of the aviation industry should be managed in a socially responsible way which leaves no region or worker behind. Quality social dialogue between strong social partners will be key to ensuring a successful transition. Sectoral action plans should be drafted by social partners and relevant authorities with the involvement of civil society. Information and consultation rights, anticipation of change, and appropriate planning involving social partners and national authorities will be vital in ensuring that the transition is socially acceptable.

**Action:** The Assembly is invited to:

- a) strengthen the long-term sustainability and decarbonisation efforts of the global aviation industry by making “just transition”, “fair transformation” and “social sustainability” its integral concepts;
- b) consider the establishment of just transition committees comprising all civil aviation stakeholders at the national level; and
- c) request ICAO to study the role and the work of the recently launched Just Transition Maritime Task Force with the aim of establishing a similar body for the global aviation industry.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Objective: Environmental Protection.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	Not applicable.
<i>References:</i>	A40-18, <i>Consolidated statement of continuing ICAO policies and practices related to environmental protection - Climate change</i> International Labour Organization (ILO), <i>Guidelines for a Just Transition Towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All</i> Toulouse Declaration on future sustainability and decarbonisation of aviation (Toulouse Declaration) UNFCCC Paris Agreement Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties

<sup>1</sup> English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish versions provided by ITF.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sustainable development is a critically important concept in the twenty-first century as well as a primary concern for decision-makers engaged in transport infrastructure development. It is therefore not surprising that sustainable development is one of the shared starting points for interaction between all global aviation industry stakeholders.

1.2 Over the past few decades, there have been a series of different initiatives at the national, regional and global levels aiming to achieve sustainable development for the aviation industry.

1.3 These efforts include many national initiatives to mitigate carbon emissions from domestic and international flights. For example, at the regional level, the European Union's Emissions Trading System (ETS) covers intra-EU flights, while ICAO's Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSA) covers international air transport.

1.4 The aviation industry is also taking action to decarbonise, notably through industry associations, including the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and Airports Council International (ACI). Furthermore, the Air Transport Action Group (ATAG) was established by aviation industry experts to work together on sustainable development issues for the industry in 1990.

1.5 Some other primary international developments have also promoted the role of sustainable development. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change adopted by United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change supports a pathway for transforming the world's mobility in the coming decades. This Paris Agreement has created the circumstances for the transport industry to develop a roadmap toward carbon neutrality.

1.6 More recently, on 4 February 2022, the Toulouse Declaration on future sustainability and decarbonisation of aviation was adopted during the EU Aviation Summit held under the French presidency of the Council of the EU<sup>2</sup>.

1.7 The European Commission, the 27 EU Member States, and 11 other Member States of the European Civil Aviation Conference (Albania, Georgia, Iceland, Moldova, Monaco, North Macedonia, Norway, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) affirmed their support for the goal of achieving carbon neutrality in the aviation industry by 2050.

1.8 Nearly 150 companies and key stakeholders, including IndustriAll European Trade Union and the ITF's European arm, the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), also supported this commitment. The Declaration invites other countries and international organisations to join the declaration, to engage in the development of sectoral roadmaps, and to work together towards a sustainable and decarbonised internal aviation industry.

## 2. THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF AVIATION SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 One of the merits of the Toulouse Declaration, which in an unprecedented manner gathered public and private stakeholders together, is that it adopts a holistic perspective. That is in line with the relevant literature, which suggests that sustainable development stands on three pillars: the environment, the economy and society. Each dimension is interlinked with the other two.

2.2 This state of being intertwined proposes that sustainable development can only be achieved when each pillar is promoted in concert with the others in a holistic fashion.

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<sup>2</sup> Declaration on Future Sustainability and Decarbonisation of Aviation' adopted at the EU Aviation Summit: [EN/FR](#)

2.3 For instance, article eight of the Declaration emphasises “the importance of also fostering the social sustainability of air transport and of addressing it at the same time as environmental and economic sustainability of air transport.”

2.4 In parallel with the emphasis above, the signatories declare the following:

“A. Strive to ensure environmentally, socially and economically sustainable and inclusive connectivity in Europe and worldwide.

(...)

D. Acknowledge the social dimension of the transition towards sustainable aviation and the importance of fostering social sustainability and just transition<sup>3</sup>, including through adequate social dialogue conducted at all stages, as well as reskilling and upskilling of workers.”

### 3. THE LEGAL BASIS

3.1 The core elements of just transition are already well rooted in international human rights law.

3.2 Just transition is explicitly reflected in a preambular recital to the above mentioned Paris Agreement. However, as the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties provides, a preamble is an integral part of the text of a treaty and critical for interpretation as they indicate context as well as the object and purpose of a treaty.

3.3 While the preamble to the Treaty may not be capable of creating a right *per se*, the relevance of the recital for the interpretation of the Paris Agreement is sacrosanct. Ratifying States should comply with their human rights obligations when carrying out climate mitigation measures under the Agreement.

3.4 The content of the just transition concept was further elaborated by the ILO constituents in 2015, who adopted unanimously the *Guidelines for a Just Transition Towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All*. The guidelines set out the key policy areas to address environmental, economic and social sustainability, which include macro-economic policies, fundamental labour rights, occupational safety and health, and social protection, among other areas. Where appropriate, a right to a just transition would entail state obligations, including allocation of necessary resources to ensure these policy areas are addressed in a holistic manner.

3.5 In October 2021, the 48th Session of the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on the recognition and implementation of a human right to a clean, safe, healthy and sustainable environment. To be fulfilled, a right to a just transition should be part of the equation as a necessary safeguard for workers and communities.

### 4. THE PIONEERING AND INSPIRING INITIATIVE OF THE MARITIME INDUSTRY

4.1 ITF believes that the global aviation industry can take inspiration from the pioneering steps taken by the maritime industry.

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<sup>3</sup> The basic tenets of “just translation” can be reached from the ILO website: [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/WCMS\\_824102/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/WCMS_824102/lang--en/index.htm)

4.2 During COP26, the Just Transition Maritime Task Force was formed. The Task Force brings together the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), the ITF, the UN Global Compact, the ILO and the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

4.3 All these organisations that make up the Task Force agree that creating a just transition has to be at the core of its work. The work of the Task Force is underpinned by the principle that to be just, the transition must ensure the safety and health of the maritime workforce and the protection of their livelihoods.

## 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The ITF, IndustriALL Global Union<sup>4</sup> and IndustriAll European Trade Union consider that an effective and successful green transition process should ensure a Just Transition. In other words, the decarbonisation of the aviation industry should be managed in a socially responsible way which leaves no region or worker behind.

5.2 Quality social dialogue between strong social partners will be key to ensuring a successful transition. Sectoral action plans should be drafted by social partners and relevant authorities with the involvement of civil society where appropriate. Information and consultation rights, anticipation of change, and appropriate planning involving social partners and national authorities will be vital in ensuring that the transition is socially acceptable.

5.3 Global aviation's shift to neutrality needs to be achieved equitably while ensuring meaningful and inclusive social dialogue at all stages and levels among all groups impacted, including aviation and aerospace workforce<sup>5</sup>. It also requires flanking policies including up-skilling, reskilling and new green skills measures and adequate resources to support the green transition in a socially responsible way.

5.4 Such an approach will also ensure that the green transition will not harm or contradict the Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations in 2015<sup>6</sup>.

## 6. ACTION

6.1 This Working Paper invites the Assembly to:

- a) strengthen the long-term sustainability and decarbonisation efforts of the global aviation industry by making “just transition”, “fair transformation” and “social sustainability” its integral concepts;
- b) consider the establishment of just transition committees comprising all civil aviation stakeholders at the national level; and
- c) request the ICAO to study the role and the work of the recently launched Just Transition Maritime Task Force with the aim of establishing a similar body for the global aviation industry.

— END —

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<sup>4</sup> [IndustriALL Global Union](#) represents 50 million workers in 140 countries in the mining, energy and manufacturing industries, including the aerospace industry.

<sup>5</sup> The use of ILO resources and expertise on social dialogue will be crucial in ensuring an action-oriented and effective outcome: <https://www.ilo.org/ifpdial/areas-of-work/social-dialogue/lang--en/index.htm>%20%20a

<sup>6</sup> Sustainable aviation is implicit, mainly in the goals SDG1, SDG2, SDG3, SDG4, SDG9, SDG10, and SDG13.