



WORKING PAPER

ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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

AGREEMENT ON A LONG-TERM ASPIRATIONAL GOAL FOR INTERNATIONAL AVIATION CO₂ EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS FROM ICAO

(Presented by the United States)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Adoption of a long-term aspirational goal for international aviation of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, in support of the Paris Agreement’s temperature goal, is critical to reaffirming ICAO’s leadership in addressing international aviation’s climate impacts. The United States supports this goal and commits to working with fellow Member States on actions to help achieve this goal, recognizing that such a goal will send a clear signal of a sustained demand and economic opportunity for lower- and zero-carbon aviation products to operators, manufacturers, and SAF producers in all Member States.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) note the publication of the updated U.S. Aviation Climate Action Plan and the domestic U.S. goal to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions from the U.S. Aviation Sector by 2050;
- b) adopt a resolution setting forth a collective long-term aspirational goal for international aviation of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, in support of the Paris Agreement’s temperature goal, recognizing that each State’s special circumstances and respective capabilities (*e.g.*, the level of development, maturity of aviation markets, sustainable growth of its international aviation, just transition, and national priorities of air transport development) will inform the ability of each State to contribute to the LTAG within its own national timeframe;
- c) encourage Member States to increase collaboration to decarbonize international aviation through information sharing, joint research, and sharing of best practices; and
- d) request Council to consider development of a finance initiative to support States in contributing to achievement of an LTAG.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Objective – <i>Environmental Protection</i> .
<i>Financial implications:</i>	None
<i>References:</i>	None

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The global aviation community finds itself at a critical point. The industry is recovering from the unprecedented downturn caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic. At the same time, the science is clear that the world must take decisive action to avoid the worst consequences of the climate crisis.

1.2 Building on the many commitments for increased ambition from States and industry, this Assembly provides a critical opportunity for the international aviation sector to increase its climate ambition. Establishing a long-term climate goal for international aviation will provide critical signals for the necessary private investment to catalyze action on technology and sustainable aviation fuels (SAF), while at the same time providing a pathway to avoid the potentially very substantial costs of climate inaction.

1.3 Tackling the climate crisis will require strong, meaningful action by all States and sectors, including aviation. While States can take individual actions to address the climate crisis, aviation is an inherently international sector, and therefore ICAO must adopt a single, global, aspirational goal all Member States and industry can work together to achieve.

1.4 We believe the conclusions from the High-level Meeting on the Feasibility of a Long-term Aspirational Goal for International Aviation CO₂ Emissions Reductions (HLM-LTAG) provide the necessary signal of commitment from ICAO Member States.¹ The United States commits to working with our fellow Member States in the coming years to strive to achieve the collective LTAG of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, in line with the HLM-LTAG outcomes.

2. THE UNITED STATES GOAL TO ACHIEVE NET-ZERO GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS FROM THE U.S. AVIATION SECTOR BY 2050

2.1 At the United Nations Climate Change Conference in November 2021, U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg announced the U.S. Aviation Climate Action Plan (Action Plan), which sets out an ambitious, yet achievable, goal of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from the U.S. aviation sector by 2050.² The Plan builds on individual operator and sector-wide commitments announced by the U.S. aviation industry, and highlights specific actions and policy measures to foster innovation and drive change across the entire U.S. aviation sector.

2.2 The Action Plan also builds on key initiatives, such as the SAF Grand Challenge announced on September 9, 2021. The SAF Grand Challenge aims to scale up SAF production to at least 3 billion gallons per year by 2030. It includes a partnership among the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to accelerate research, development, demonstration, and deployment needed for innovative solutions and technologies and the policy framework to enable an ambitious government-wide commitment to scale up the production of SAF. We believe that these combined efforts will help reduce the cost, enhance the sustainability, and expand the production of SAF that achieves at least a 50 percent reduction in lifecycle GHG emissions compared to conventional fuel. The Challenge's ultimate goal is to supply sufficient SAF to meet 100% of U.S. aviation fuel demand by 2050.

2.3 While the Action Plan is focused on our domestic efforts, we believe that many of the actions identified in the Plan could be adopted by others, and we also believe that many Member States are taking actions that can be applied elsewhere. We hope in the coming years that we can work closely with

¹ https://www.icao.int/Meetings/HLM-LTAG/Documents/ICAO_Doc_10178-HLM_LTAG_Report.pdf.

² <https://www.faa.gov/sustainability/aviation-climate-action-plan>.

our fellow Member States to share information, best practices, and lessons learned as we work toward our collective global goal.

3. AGREEING TO A LONG-TERM ASPIRATIONAL GOAL FOR AVIATION CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

3.1 At the 40th Session of the ICAO Assembly, the Council was requested to explore the feasibility of an LTAG for international aviation, for consideration at this 41st Session of the ICAO Assembly. To support this request, the ICAO Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP) developed a Long-Term Aspirational Goal Final Report. This report formed the basis for discussions at the HLM-LTAG earlier this year. As noted previously, the conclusions from the HLM-LTAG indicate a commitment from nearly all Member States to work together on ambitious climate action.

3.2 The United States supports adoption of an ambitious LTAG for international aviation at this Assembly. As previously noted, the United States published a domestic goal of net-zero GHG emissions from the U.S. aviation sector by 2050 in our most recent Climate Action Plan. The United States hopes that the collaborative spirit from the HLM-LTAG is present at Assembly and beyond. The impacts of climate change on the international aviation system (*e.g.*, flooded airport infrastructure, operational and economic disruptions) or potentially drastic impacts on States that are particularly reliant on aviation like Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) make clear the need for all Member States to reaffirm this commitment and support the adoption of the LTAG identified in Working Paper A41-WP/369.

3.3 Adoption of an LTAG will send a clear signal that there will be a long-term and sustained demand and economic opportunity for lower- and zero-carbon aviation products to operators, manufacturers, and SAF producers in all Member States. We also firmly believe that every state should be able to meaningfully participate in the achievement of that LTAG and in the economic benefits that correspond to its achievement. SAF, for instance, is forecast to be a multi-trillion dollar industry, with a range of feedstocks from around the globe capable of fulfilling the global demand for SAF.

3.4 Many Member States have raised concerns that investment and finance will be critical to support countries and relevant stakeholders to contribute to or benefit from ICAO's LTAG. The United States recognizes such concerns, and we believe that ICAO should play its part within the international system to achieve that outcome. Broadly, we foresee ICAO serving two key functions in addressing this problem. First, ICAO can regularly bring together global leaders and experts across functions from different communities of climate, financial, policy, and aviation expertise, with a view to identifying investment opportunities and establishing enabling environments through policies that can help attract investment to decarbonize aviation. Second, ICAO can increase its role as a provider of technical assistance and capacity building to all States, with a particular emphasis on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

3.5 If this Assembly adopts an LTAG, it will be critical for the ICAO Council to consider steps to help States meaningfully participate in achieving an LTAG. This could be done through a State Letter or survey as ICAO has done previously. In addition, the Council could request that ICAO Secretariat work with multilateral development banks and other available public and private sources of funding to identify and share information with States on different opportunities—in particular for States that have clearly identified needs.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 For more than 75 years, ICAO has set global standards for aviation. Now, the world is taking action on climate. States and industries are making meaningful commitments and taking steps to tackle the climate crisis. To maintain its credibility, ICAO must act. The failure to establish a meaningful long-term climate goal for international aviation will erode trust in the institution and shake the very bedrock on which international aviation is based.

4.2 The United States is committed to an ambitious climate agenda in international aviation. International aviation is key to the world's connectivity, and as we recover from the global pandemic, we must do so in a way that is sustainable and aligned with the world's climate goals.

4.3 The Assembly is invited to:

- a) note the publication of the updated U.S. Aviation Climate Action Plan and the domestic U.S. goal to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions from the U.S. Aviation Sector by 2050;
- b) adopt a resolution setting forth a collective long-term aspirational goal for international aviation of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, in support of the Paris Agreement's temperature goal, recognizing that each State's special circumstances and respective capabilities (*e.g.*, the level of development, maturity of aviation markets, sustainable growth of its international aviation, just transition, and national priorities of air transport development) will inform the ability of each State to contribute to the LTAG within its own national timeframe;
- c) encourage Member States to increase collaboration to decarbonize international aviation through information sharing, joint research, and sharing of best practices; and
- d) request Council to consider development of a finance initiative to support States in contributing to achievement of an LTAG.

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