



INFORMATION PAPER

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**Thirty Sixth Regional Aviation Safety Group — Pan America Executive Steering Committee Meeting
(ESC/36)
19 to 20 May 2021**

Agenda Item 4: Other Business

HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON COVID-19 (HLCC 2021)

(Presented by the Secretariat)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This information paper briefs on the High-Level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC), which provisional theme will be “One Vision for Aviation Recovery, Resilience and Sustainability beyond the Global Pandemic”. The HLCC 2021 will address various COVID-19-related items under a single umbrella, replacing the originally planned Third High-level Safety Conference (HLSC 2021), the High-level Facilitation Conference (HLFC 2021) and the High-level event envisaged by the Council Aviation Recovery Taskforce (CART) aims to strengthen State commitments to leading the recovery from the pandemic. The confirmed dates and meeting schedule will be communicated by the end of May 2021. The **Appendix** shows the provisional agenda of the Conference.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety • Security & Facilitation • Economic Development of Air Transport
<i>References:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Letter Ref. 2020/131

1. Introduction

1.1 Following the work programme of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and requests from the States, ICAO had originally planned for the 2021 Third High-Level Safety Conference (HLSC) to be held in Montréal, Canada. Similarly, the convening of the First High-Level Facilitation Conference (HLFC) was scheduled for 2021.

1.2 During the 219th Session, the Council agreed to hold a special high-level conference as well, at an appropriate time, to discuss and share best practice response measures to deal with COVID-19 outbreaks. The ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) report also stated that “ICAO should consider convening a high-level meeting.”

1.3 In light of the concerns expressed with regards to organizing three high-level meetings in 2021, the Council approved the convening of a single high-level conference that would replace the two initially proposed high-level conferences and one high-level COVID-19 event.

1.4 In this regard, the Secretariat consulted with the Member States on the agenda items and the expected outcomes, which resulted in the consultation of State letter Ref. 2020/131 dated 15 December 2020 seeking comments on the provisional agenda for the HLCC 2021 by 15 February 2021. In this State letter, the Secretariat proposed that along with the provisional theme of “A Vision for Aviation Recovery, Resilience and Sustainability beyond the Global Pandemic”, the HLCC 2021 considers a broad range of issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic response and the recovery of the aviation sector.

1.5 During the 223rd ICAO Council Session, a small Ad Hoc Group was tasked to identify the anticipated deliverables and expected outcomes of the Conference; review and adjust the agenda; and develop guidelines for the preparation and submission of working papers, including applicable timelines. The Group held its first meeting on 16 April 2021 to advance these assigned tasks, and for the finalization of the agenda.

2. High-Level Conference on COVID-19

2.1 As of 25 February 2021, 24 responses were received from 21 States and 3 international organizations. Given the uncertainties surrounding ongoing COVID-19 travel restrictions, the HLCC 2021 is proposed to take place from 12 to 22 October 2021, either one of the following two options: a) a one-week event, from 18 to 22 October 2021, in an in-person setting; or b) a two-week event, from 12 to 22 October 2021, with half-day meetings each day, in a virtual or hybrid setting

2.2 In planning a hybrid meeting, extreme cautions shall be exercised in compliance with the public health measures and travel advice advisories issued by the Governments of Canada, local restrictions in Quebec, and the guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO). This is to protect the health of meeting participants, local residents and others from COVID-19.

2.3 The Conference will consist of two technical components, one on Safety and the other on Facilitation, as well as the Plenary Session and provisional agenda (**Appendix**) reflecting the received comments. The Secretariat will refine the agenda to prioritize issues related to COVID-19, in particular the Facilitation component.

2.4 Following the best practices for virtual meetings, flexible daily half-day meetings will be scheduled to accommodate the different time zones of the participants from around the world. A detailed timetable, including the sequence of the meetings, will be communicated through a State letter by the end of May 2021, along with the agenda, other administrative arrangements such as credentials and registration and the delivery of supporting documentation.

2.5 The objective of the Conference is to reach a Global consensus on a multilateral approach, supported by political will and commitments of States, to enabling the safe and efficient recovery of aviation from the COVID-19 crisis and building a foundation to strengthen resilience in aviation and make it more sustainable in the future. Under the proposed theme of “One Vision for Aviation Recovery, Resilience and Sustainability beyond the Global Pandemic”, the conference will consider a broad range of issues relating to the recovery, resilience and sustainability of the aviation sector, as well as the economic impact of COVID-19, with the particular focus on its safety and facilitation objectives for the coming years. The Conference is an opportunity to promote and strengthen collective efforts to harmonize measures and risk management strategy through the implementation of the recommendations by the Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART).

2.6 Finally, following the high public and political expectation on the role of ICAO on the Aviation recovery and restart, the Conference will look to set out a global approach or possibly a global framework to address, inter alia, vaccination, testing, certificates and mutual recognition. Also, the Conference will address safety matters and its implications due to COVID-19, as well as the future implementation of the *Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP)* and other Safety improvements will be addressed, for which States and Territories, International Organizations and stakeholders participating in RASG-PA are invited to support and attend the HLCC 2021.

**APPENDIX
AGENDA**

1. Three Ministerial Plenary Sessions will be organized in an interactive “round table” format.
 - a) **Opening and Ministerial Plenary.** Ministers, heads of international organizations, as well as industry leaders will discuss national recovery priorities and expectations for international cooperation to cope with the economic fallout of the pandemic, to uphold the industry’s financial viability and durability, to restore air connectivity, and to strengthen public confidence for air travel.
 - b) **Ministerial Plenary – Building Resilience and Sustainability.** This Ministerial Plenary will look beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and explore policy responses and strategic directions towards building a more resilient international civil aviation system than before. Exchange of ideas and thoughts on policy requirements for aviation to adapt to the different trends arising from the current crisis (such as growing attention to health and hygiene standards throughout the travel processes), and collectively identify long-term approaches that can reduce its vulnerability and increase its resilience while promoting sustainability.
 - c) **Closing and Ministerial Plenary – Shaping Political Responses to COVID-19 Challenges.** The Ministerial Plenary (Closing) aims to set up firm commitments to confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral actions to two pertinent subjects that require strong political support, i.e.
 - 1) Enable the safe and efficient recovery of civil aviation, including full resumption of travel, trade and global supply chains;
 - 2) Build foundation to strengthen resilience in aviation and make it sustainable in the future;
 - 3) The Declaration will be issued to reinforce the recommendations by the Conference, strengthen multilateral cooperation, and elevate the priorities of aviation in the global, regional and national agendas.

2. **Safety Stream.** Considering the dramatic global economic and social impact that the COVID-19 crisis has engendered, the aviation system is standing on the doorstep of rapid transformation. It is important to ensure that the global aviation community continues to work together on strategic planning in managing aviation safety and responding to new challenges. So as to enhance regulatory capacity, improve current processes and procedures, and to embrace changes in aviation. The topics to be covered during the safety stream of the Conference are:

- a) **Safety and Operational measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic;**
 - 1) Contingency arrangements by the States;
 - 2) Lessons learnt and how to plan for mitigating the effects of a similar occurrence in the future.

- b) **Strategy and policy;**
 - 1) Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP), and implementation of regional and national aviation safety plans;
 - 2) Evolving regulatory capacity in aviation;
 - 3) Training approaches;
 - 4) Current processes and procedures to ensure safe development of civil aviation.

- c) **Standardization:** The Conference will discuss new challenges associated with the evolution in aviation as well as those related to the transport of Dangerous Goods, risk generated by passengers, new types of aircraft and other new entrants as well as ground handling which is of increasing importance to safety, regularity, efficiency and performance of airport operations. The Conference will be invited to put forward recommendations on:
 - 1) How challenges and risk associated with the evolution in aviation can be effectively managed to minimize adverse consequences;
 - 2) How to ensure safety and efficiency in ground handling; and

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3) How to ensure effective “cooperative” oversight while ensuring that all Member States will be able to effectively fulfil their safety oversight functions and responsibilities.

d) **Implementation and support:** Expanding existing partnerships and a proactive engagement with industry will be essential. The Conference will be invited to put forward recommendations on:

1) Improving global aviation safety through Regional Safety Oversight Organizations (RSOs), Cooperative Development of Operational Safety and Continuing Airworthiness Programmes (COSCAPs) and Regional Accident and Incident Investigation Organizations (RAIOs); and

2) Regional implementation support partnership and mechanisms, including regional aviation safety groups (RASGs) and planning and implementation regional groups (PIRGs).

3. **Facilitation Stream.** The aviation sector has faced ever-growing challenges that imperilled businesses large and small, and the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people worldwide. Globally- and regionally-harmonized, mutually accepted facilitation operational measures are essential, and should be compatible with safety requirements and proportionate to the evolving public health situation.

- a) Facilitation operational measures related to COVID-19 pandemic and beyond;
- b) Enhancing National Coordination and International Cooperation;
- c) Enhancing digital data sharing to facilitate seamless and contactless processes during and beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic;
- d) Future approaches to management of sustainable health-related Facilitation measures for the passenger experience and advancing the implementation monitoring

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