



Agenda Item 4A: Initiatives for the Development and sustainability of air transport in the Region

AIR TRANSPORT FACILITATION

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY	
<p>This working paper presents aspects of facilitation in the context of the recovery from COVID-19 and the conclusions of the High-Level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021) and associated outcomes of the Forty-first Session of ICAO Assembly (A41). Its objective is to encourage the States of the Region to consider and promote facilitation within the framework of air transport as a fundamental tool for the recovery of International Civil Aviation.</p>	
References:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Annex 9 – Facilitation - Amendment 29</i> - <i>Doc 10184 – Assembly Resolution in Force (as of 7 October 2022)</i> - <i>Doc 9957 –FAL Manual</i> - <i>Doc 9303 – Machine Readable Travel Documents</i> - <i>Doc 9944 – Guidelines on Passenger Name Record (PNR) Data</i> - <i>Doc 10042 – Model National Air Transport Facilitation Programme</i> - <i>Doc 10152 – Manual on COVID-19 Cross-border Risk Management</i> - <i>Doc 10160, High-Level Conference on COVID-19 (Montréal, 12 to 22 October 2021). Report</i> - <i>Take-off: Guidance for Air Travel through the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis</i> - <i>Declaration to promote connectivity through the development and maintenance of air transport in the Pan-American region that presents the vision for the 2020-2035, Sept. 2018</i> - <i>Electronic Bulletin – EB 2023/6 Risk Assessment Prior to Introduction of COVID-19 Air Travel Requirements,, 16 January 2023</i> 	
ICAO Strategic Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A: Safety</i> <i>C: Aviation security and facilitation</i> <i>D: Air transport economic development</i>

1. Introduction

1.1 The Facilitation Section (FAL) of the Air Transport Bureau is one of four sections in charge of delivering results regarding the ICAO Strategic Objective: Security and Facilitation. Its main responsibility is to develop and update Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) related to the facilitation of the international air transport system, contained in Annex 9 — *Facilitation*. The Section manages and oversees the Facilitation Programme, which include three inter-related programmes, Annex 9 — *Facilitation*, the ICAO Traveller Identification Programme (TRIP) Strategy and the ICAO

Public Key Directory (PKD). The Section also oversees and manages the work programmes of the Facilitation Panel (FALP) and its respective working groups, the Technical Advisory Group on the Traveller Identification Programme (ICAO TAG/TRIP) and its working groups, as well as, the development of technical specifications for Machine Readable Travel Documents (MRTDs), published as Doc 9303, and the operation of the Public Key Directory (PKD), including the PKD Board. Additionally, the Section provides support to the ICAO Assembly, the Council and the Air Transport Committee (ATC). The Section is also responsible for assisting States in the implementation of the SARPs of Annex 9, and monitors the compliance of the respective States through the Annex 9 Compliance Checklist in the Electronic Filing of Difference (EFOD) system.

1.2 During the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), through the Council Aviation Recovery Taskforce (CART) developed the CART recommendations and *The take-off guidance material* that establish a framework for practical and aligned guidance for governments and industry to restart the international air transport sector and recover from the impacts of COVID-19 in a globally coordinated manner.

1.3 The High-Level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021) was held virtually from 12 to 22 October 2021. In total, 1,786 members and observers appointed by 129 Member States and 38 international organizations, as well as advisers and others. Fifty-six Ministers and Vice-Ministers and 24 heads of international organizations attended the Plenary Ministerial sessions of the Conference, which were endorsed by the Council and 41st Session of the Assembly.

1.4 It is recognized that facilitation is a key component in efforts to maintain the continuity of aviation-related operations during the pandemic. Taking into account the diversity of topics covered under Facilitation, the lessons learnt from the pandemic and the recovery of operations, States are urged to consider evaluating and proposing actions to develop and/or support the area of Facilitation in their States and define clear objectives.

2. Discussion

2.1 Post-COVID-19 pandemic facilitation operational measures

2.1.1 Accepted and harmonized global and regional facilitation operational measures are essential and must be compatible with the safety requirements. These measures are mentioned in the HLCC Report 2021 list of recommendations for health risk mitigation measures (PHRMM) in aviation, and described in the CART guidance material, in ICAO Doc 10152, *Manual on COVID-19 Cross-border Risk Management* and in Electronic Bulletin (EB) 2023/06 of 16 January 2023 on risk assessment prior to the establishment of requirements due to COVID-19 for air transport. These also consider the importance of conducting risk assessments taking into account the contextual factors of the State, risk tolerance, and the practical application of public health risk mitigation measures in aviation.

2.1.2 The effective communication of public health measures, travel restrictions and other requirements are essential to ensure air operations, and States should not require measures that are not harmonized with the guidance of the corresponding organizations.

2.1.3 As more States lift COVID-19 related cross-border restrictions on air travel, it is important that, in order to improve air connectivity and facilitation in all States around the world, such restrictions are only established and based on well-founded risk management, following the recommendations and guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO) and ICAO. This approach helps to improve travel, tourism, trade and economies.

2.2 Step up national coordination and international cooperation

2.2.1 The coordination and collaboration between public health and aviation authorities, necessary to facilitate effective air transport operations, has shown limitations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Advances in facilitation depend on the coordination of various interests and the cooperation of the various agencies concerned. The implementation of the National Air Transport Facilitation Program (NATFP), the establishment and active operation of National Air Transport Facilitation Committees (NATFC) or their equivalent, are a proven means of making necessary improvements in dispatch control formalities and achieve a coordinated approach among all stakeholders involved in the response to a pandemic.

2.2.2 In addition to Annex 9, Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) that address public health risks are also included in other ICAO Annexes, namely: Annex 6, Annex 11, Annex 14, Annex 15 and Annex 18.

2.2.3 Improving the public health-related SARPs and guidance material in the different annexes and aligning them with CART guidance and other existing policies in the United Nations system can provide a unified framework that will enhance national and international cooperation in multiple sectors.

2.2.4 Likewise, for national coordination of facilitation matters and effective implementation of Annex 9 provisions, it is essential to strengthen the appropriate authority for the facilitation of air transport, to take the necessary measures to ensure a systematic development of the NATFP, and to ensure that all relevant State entities and agencies participate effectively in the NATFC or its equivalent.

2.2.5 In addition to the coordination and collaboration framework between authorities, the training of relevant personnel in facilitation is important for the consideration of Annex 9 provisions in the States' decisions for coordination and implementation measures. The ICAO Annex 9 — *Facilitation* course, the ICAO TRIP Strategy course and the Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims and their Families course are available in virtual and classroom formats.

2.2.6 With respect to international cooperation, a good example is the ICAO CAPSCA Programme (Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation). This consists of a collaborative network of States, UN organizations, aviation industry stakeholders and medical stakeholders in relation to Public Health and Aviation Medicine. CAPSCA supports the development and implementation of the SARPs related to public health at the international, regional, national and local levels through different mechanisms. In addition, CAPSCA provides assistance to States with the implementation of the World Health Organisation (WHO) International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) and with the preparedness planning and rapid response to public health emergencies that may affect the aviation sector.

2.2.7 During the COVID-19 pandemic, CAPSCA has played a fundamental role in the provision of information and guidance to support decision-making by different stakeholders and assisting with the dissemination of relevant information. In addition, CAPSCA assisted CART during the pandemic. Additional organizations and States joined CAPSCA during the pandemic, making it necessary to conduct a mapping process with all the relevant interested parties for the establishment of sustainable financing mechanisms and the corresponding human resources, in line with the inclusion in future strategies.

2.2.8 ICAO has created FAL iPacks in response to the need for training oriented to the standardization in the implementation of the Facilitation Programmes. This training package is available for all interested States. Up to now, three States of the SAM Region have benefited from the FAL iPack: Argentina, Ecuador and Panama, and Guyana is ready to start with the package.

2.3 Foster digital data sharing to facilitate seamless, contactless processes during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond

2.3.1 Digital solutions facilitate fast and efficient reorganization of airport and cross-border processes, smoother movements without queues, and travel without physical contact. The aviation community has required the application of this type of solutions for a safe restart during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in many cases, existing capacities and infrastructure did not allow it. In this regard, States have recognized the need to improve infrastructure for data exchange between the government and the private sector in order to facilitate a smoother travel processes without physical contact.

2.3.2 States and industry have invested for years in facilitating passenger processing in order to be able to have seamless operations without physical contact. Though efforts have grown in importance during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the need to limit personal interactions and physical contact, processes have also become more difficult due to public health entry and exit requirements, making it difficult to comply with recommendations e.g. requirements for physical distancing at airports.

2.3.3 This situation demands a need for standardization and harmonization of the new health requirements with the already existing tools for border control and passenger processing, and with the tools developed to accommodate the new requirements within a standardized, harmonized and interoperable framework. ICAO has developed a variety of tools and capacities¹ that can provide the foundation for a digital ecosystem to support contactless processing taking into account interoperability and security, while respecting privacy concerns.

2.3.4 Annex 9 — *Facilitation*, in its Amendment 29, 16th edition, contains a series of new and revised Standards and Recommended Practices regarding, inter alia, public health and passenger data exchange, such as API, iAPI and PNR. When used in coordination by the relevant authorities, nationally and/or internationally, these systems have the potential to reduce impacts and optimize the border control process, thus increasing the safety and protection of passengers and society in general, including public health issues.

2.3.5 States should consider digitalization of passenger processing in accordance with ICAO specifications and international guidance to indicate that passengers and crew members have met the requirements to prevent and mitigate the spread of communicable diseases by air transport.

2.4 Future approaches to manage sustainable health-related facilitation measures that enhance passenger experience and promote implementation monitoring

2.4.1 Currently only security-related Standards are audited under the Continuous Monitoring Approach of the Universal Security Audit Programme (USAP-CMA). The processes applicable in the case of assistance to victims of aircraft accidents and their families are audited within the framework of the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme Continuous Monitoring Approach (USOAP CMA). It makes it necessary to examine and propose a way to monitor effectively the implementation of the new and/or revised health-related provisions, which implementation will be recommended by the Member States.

2.4.2 The number of elderly and disabled people traveling by air continues to grow, taking advantage of the increased opportunities for domestic and international air travel. However, there are still many obstacles limiting the ability of elderly persons and people with disabilities to take full advantage of

¹ <https://www.icao.int/Security/FAL/TRIP/Pages/Publications.aspx>

international air transport services. These obstacles are further challenged in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.4.3 ICAO already has SARPs and guidance material in Doc 9984 - *Manual on Access to Air Transport by Persons with Disabilities* related to the facilitation of transportation for persons with disabilities, and these generally seek to ensure that airport facilities and services suit your needs. In this regard, States are strongly encouraged to provide special assistance in a manner that respects the dignity of the person, and are also encouraged to cooperate appropriately to make all elements of a journey accessible to persons with disabilities.

2.5 **Public Health Corridor – PHC**

2.5.1 Existing cooperation mechanisms may not be sufficient to implement mutually accepted risk mitigation measures during public health emergencies by means of existing bilateral or multilateral agreements between States, especially when there are several States and multiple sectors involved. Future public health emergencies may require different considerations in light of different epidemiological scenarios or different types of public health events, making necessary the development of a comprehensive multi-scenario framework for implementing a PHC in a more harmonized and timely manner in future.

2.5.2 A PHC is formed when two or more States or regions agree to recognize public health risk mitigation measures that each have implemented on one or more routes between their States, within which they can continue or resume air travel. The establishment of PHC between States requires the exchange of information within the relevant national departments of a State, and internationally between States, which require cooperative decision-making and robust communication channels. Involving industry stakeholders in these discussions also contributes to the success of implementation of PHCs.

2.5.3 These discussions should follow a risk-based and evidence-informed approach assessing factors such as national priorities, national legislation, public health capacities and other public health aspects, operational safety aspects, and others to facilitate decision-making and mutual acceptance risk mitigation measures. Depending on agreements between States, crew or passengers may be exempt from some requirements such as COVID-19 testing, quarantine or other requirements.

2.5.4 While discussions for the implementation of PHCs in the region take place, States are encouraged to recognize the importance of developing a multi-scenario framework for the implementation of the PHC during public health emergencies and continue to provide support to ICAO to advance the work on the PHC.

2.5.5 ICAO has created the PHC iPack during the pandemic, which is available for all States. Up to now, three States have benefited with this assistance in the SAM Region: Colombia, Peru and Uruguay, with excellent results.

3. **Conclusion**

3.1 States should consider the issues presented in item 2 of this WP and develop action plans to strengthen facilitation in the States, in order to sustain air transport during public health events that may affect civil aviation in the future.

3.2 The High-Level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC) provided the opportunity for States to present their actions and recommendations to strengthen aviation resilience and make it more sustainable in the future. The Conference discussed the facilitation component topics presented in the WP, and the

SAM Regional Office is available to support whatever is necessary for the proposal of topics by the States of our region.

4. **Suggested action**

- 4.1 The Seventeenth Meeting of Civil Aviation Authorities of the SAM Region is invited to:
- a) Take note of the importance of facilitation during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - b) Establish actions to strengthen the area of facilitation in the States, especially the effective implementation of the NATFP and NATFC;
 - c) Urge the civil aviation authorities to update their organizational charts, and develop training programmes on Facilitation for relevant personnel and take advantage of ICAO Facilitation Courses;
 - d) Analyse the report of the High-Level Conference on COVID-19 and make proposals that can promote and strengthen collective initiatives for the harmonization of measures in the States of the SAM Region;
 - e) Comply with the Standards and Recommended Practices of Annex 9 regarding the implementation of passenger data exchange systems, in coordination with the relevant authorities, and seek to use the data using risk management, in order to achieve the necessary security with the minimum of inconvenience to passengers and for the release or dispatch of merchandise.
 - f) Actively participate in the CAPSCA Group and collaborate in the development of an implementation strategy for the CART recommendations together with the recommendations of the Public Health Authorities in their States, the recommendations of the High-Level Conference on COVID-19 and with the ICAO Electronic Bulletin - EB 2023/6 from 16 January 2023; and
 - g) States that have not yet requested iPacks on PHC and FAL are encouraged to request this iPacks. These are extremely beneficial for their States and for Regional standardization.

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