



Agenda Item 5A: Other business

ADVANCING ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

(Presented by the International Air Transport Association - IATA)

SUMMARY

Persons with disabilities and aging persons are an increasingly important segment of air travel demand for the industry's business and a factor for diversifying destinations and products in travel development strategies.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) requires its parties to take appropriate measures so that persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communication including information technologies and systems, and other facilities and services open or provided to the public both in urban and rural areas. The Convention has also identified the need for international cooperation to create a legislative framework with a concrete, enforceable and time-bound benchmark for monitoring the gradual implementation of accessibility for all.

In October 2022, the 41st Session of the ICAO Assembly passed a Resolution that committed to developing guidance on the design and implementation of a policy aimed at making air transport more accessible for passengers with disabilities and reduced mobility.

IATA volunteers to support ICAO and its Member States with this work.

To promote a consistent and coordinated airline policy and to ensure high-quality service provision, IATA calls on ICAO to build on the resolution passed at the 41st Assembly and support the development of a dedicated work program that will generate a set of globally recognized policy guidance on accessible air transport, that will, in turn, drive a more consistent policy approach to accessibility around the world.

Actions: The meeting is invited to:

- (a) Support collaboration between states, industry, and disability associations to improve the air travel conditions of persons with disabilities in every country, including developing countries.
- (b) Build on the resolution passed at the 41st ICAO Assembly and support ICAO with the development of a robust and long-term accessibility strategy and work plan with the aim of reaching access in all countries.

References:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities¹ • ICAO Resolution Assembly 2022 • ICAO High-level conference report • UN strategy 2021 • UN report on an aging population 	
ICAO Strategic Objectives:	<p>This working paper relates to the following Strategic Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development of Air Transport • Facilitation

1. Introduction

1.1 Air travel today is an integral part of the lifestyle of much of society. It carries significant weight in the economies of many countries, is one of the leading elements of international trade, and plays an increasing role in connectivity, communication, and knowledge exchange.

1.2 Given its nature and its positive impact, air travel should be accessible to all passengers and therefore needs to guarantee the elimination of barriers to enable an enjoyable and safe travel experience.

1.3 Persons with disabilities and aging persons are an increasingly important segment of air travel demand for the industry's business and a factor for diversifying destinations and products in travel development strategies.

1.4 According to the UN World Population Ageing report, globally, there were 727 million persons aged 65 years or over in 2020. Over the next three decades, the number of older persons worldwide is projected to more than double, reaching over 1.5 billion in 2050.

1.5 As the process of population aging continues to advance in both developed and developing countries, it is important to ensure continued and equitable access to leisure and travel for this segment of passengers during all stages of the travel journey.

1.6 The almost universal ratification of the UN Convention, together with the adoption and implementation of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, aims to demonstrate the concrete commitments of the international community to mainstreaming disability as both a social right and a global development imperative.

1.7 In October 2022, the 41st Session of the ICAO Assembly passed a Resolution that committed to developing guidance on the design and implementation of a policy aimed at making air transport more accessible for passengers with disabilities and reduced mobility.

1.8 IATA commits to support ICAO and the Member States with this work.

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/ConventionRightsPersonsWithDisabilities.aspx>

2. **The Value Of Accessibility**

2.1 Persons with disabilities and aging persons as a valuable segment of air travel demand.

2.2 Estimates of the potential travel demand that persons with disabilities and aging persons may constitute are usually only partial and vary significantly in terms of the number and typology of potential travelers. There is a widespread consensus that this demand has the following characteristics:

2.2.1 It is constantly increasing due to incorporating improvements in infrastructure, information, facilities granted, or other determining factors.

2.2.2 It can boost the image of the country and the business as accessible and inclusive.

2.2.3 It has a significant impact on reducing the seasonality of certain destinations.

2.2.4 It generates more than the average revenue resulting from conventional travel.

2.3 IATA committed to disability inclusion through its Annual General Meeting in 2019 and reiterated its commitment to providing safe, reliable, and dignified travel to passengers with disabilities and aging persons.

2.4 IATA has actively engaged with a broad range of regulatory agencies over the years, with international organizations, stakeholders, and representatives of the disability community to advance air transport accessibility and disability inclusion altogether.

2.5 Throughout this engagement, our goal is to be pragmatic and ensure that the development of accessibility regulations and practices deliver ‘one step at a time’ clearly defined, measurable policy objectives to provide a safe and positive travel experience not only to the disability community but to everyone. When we support disability, we incentive societies to be equal and improve. If an environment is accessible, convenient, and a pleasure to use everyone benefits.

2.6 IATA is a strong advocate of a collaborative approach between states, private businesses, and persons with disabilities to eliminate barriers that limit accessibility through proactive identification, removal, and prevention of these barriers, through appropriate coordination mechanisms and joint programs.

3. **Looking forward: the need for consistent and coordinated accessibility work**

3.1 Over the past years, States have shown a clear and positive interest in advancing accessibility for passengers with a disability.

3.2 The existence of barriers capable of discouraging part of the population from traveling has been a matter of concern and has gradually given rise to national regulations aimed at overcoming those limitations to the practice of activities, including air transport, which should be accessible by law.

3.3 The resulting landscape of differing national regulations across the globe is, at times, leading to unnecessary financial costs and operational challenges for airlines. In addition, and more importantly, it is leading to confusion and discomfort for passengers with accessibility needs.

3.4 The fragmentation of national regulation does not help the industry to consolidate policies and processes and leaves room for interpretation by the experts in charge of the work.

3.5 By its very nature, international air transport involves multiple parties working together, operating into and out of more than one (national) legal jurisdiction every time a plane takes off or lands, and connecting to different carriers during the same itinerary.

3.6 IATA members want to ensure that as an industry, we avoid offering non-cohesive, inconsistent, or disjointed accessible services across a passenger's journey. This would inevitably result in a less accessible journey than each actor involved would have intended.

3.7 To this point, IATA respectfully asks national regulators to address consistent design and application of their regulations within the framework of international cooperation with ICAO and other States and to ensure consistent service delivery.

3.8 We respectfully encourage States to support ICAO in developing a dedicated accessibility work program that will generate a set of globally recognized policy guidance on accessible air transport that will, in turn, drive a more consistent policy approach to accessibility worldwide.

3.9 This work program should review facilitation practices and standards and build on the need for a broader and more holistic approach to accessibility regulations, as requested by the UN Convention and approved during the ICAO General Assembly.

4. **Conclusion**

4.1 The aviation industry has since long committed to providing quality service to members of the disability community and aging persons,

4.2 The need of the hour is a rational response to the continuous call to action from passengers, industry, and states in the accessibility field, harmoniously leading states, airlines, and passengers. This will help elevate the existing and growing chaos in the states and with industry.

4.3 It is now the time to act, and we ask states to bring national efforts into one guided by ICAO to help address the patchwork of inconsistent accessibility regulations that are already working as a barrier to making air travel a comfortable and positive experience for all.

5. **Suggested action**

5.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) Support collaboration between states, industry, and disability associations to improve the air travel conditions of persons with disabilities in every country, including developing countries.
- b) Build on the resolution passed at the 41st Assembly and support ICAO with the development of a robust and long-term accessibility strategy and work plan with the aim of reaching access in all countries.