



International Civil Aviation Organization

MIDANPIRG Air Traffic Management Sub-Group

Seventh Meeting (ATM SG/7)
(Virtual, 15 – 18 November 2021)

Agenda Item 7: Any other Business

TRAFFIC RECOVERY FROM EFFECTS OF COVID19 PANDEMIC

(Presented by the United Arab Emirates)

SUMMARY
Following the COVID 19 Pandemic and its impact to Global and Regional Air Traffic a slow but steady recovery can be observed. This information paper presents the traffic situation in the United Arab Emirates and an outlook to the operational impact of further traffic growth.
Action by the meeting is at paragraph 3.
REFERENCE(S)
UAE AIR TRAFFIC MOVEMENTS OPERATIONAL DATA

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic stopped the entire world. Aviation was amongst those sectors of economy that were hit the most. To curb the spread of the pandemic travel was severely restricted or banned in large parts of the world. This also applied to the MID region, and the UAE.

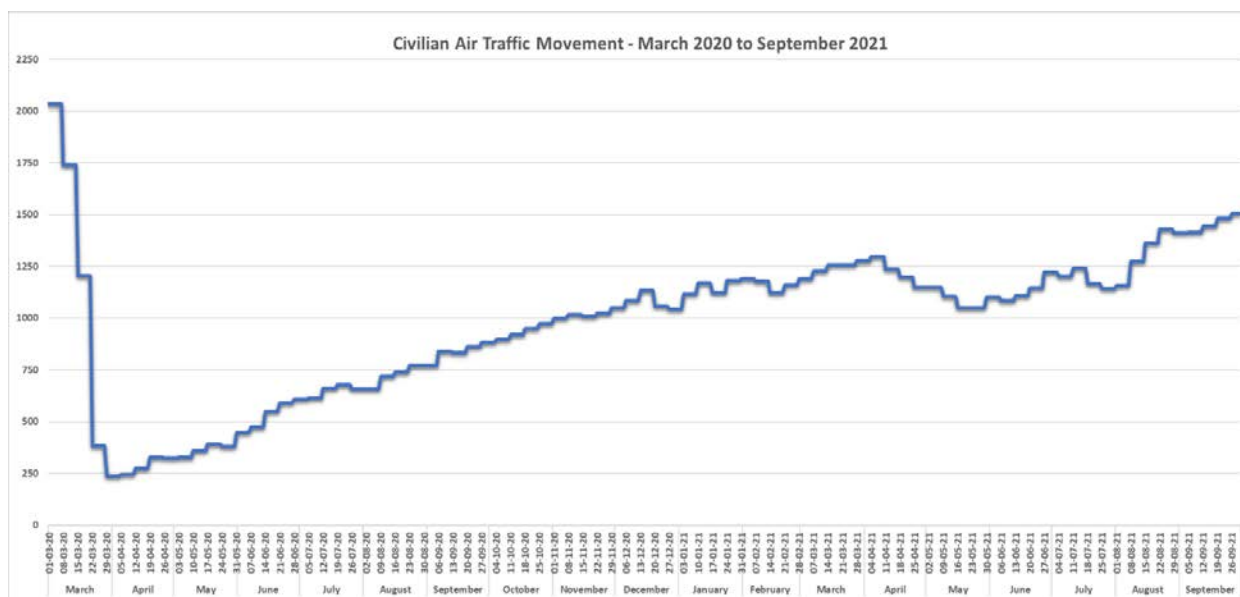
Since the start of the pandemic and thanks to the implementation of a number of precautionary measures and in particular the availability of effective vaccines, air travel has experienced a slow, but continues recovery.

The following paper provides information from the perspective of the United Arab Emirates on how air travel is recovering.

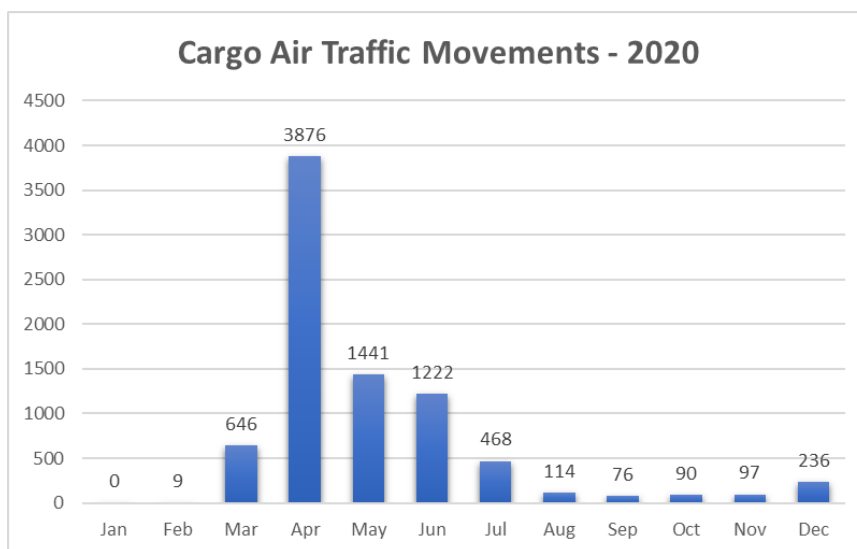
2. DISCUSSION

2.1 In March 2020 the impact COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy became clearly visible worldwide. The air transportation industry in the UAE was not spared as travel restrictions on multiple levels were implemented to curb the spread of the disease.

2.2 As a consequence, the average daily number of civilian flights dropped from more than 2000 to as low as 235 within March 2020. Despite the initial hope for a quick recovery the air traffic number recovered slowly. The additional travel restrictions and travel bans that were implemented to fight the different COVID waves in the last 18 months contributed to the slow recovery.



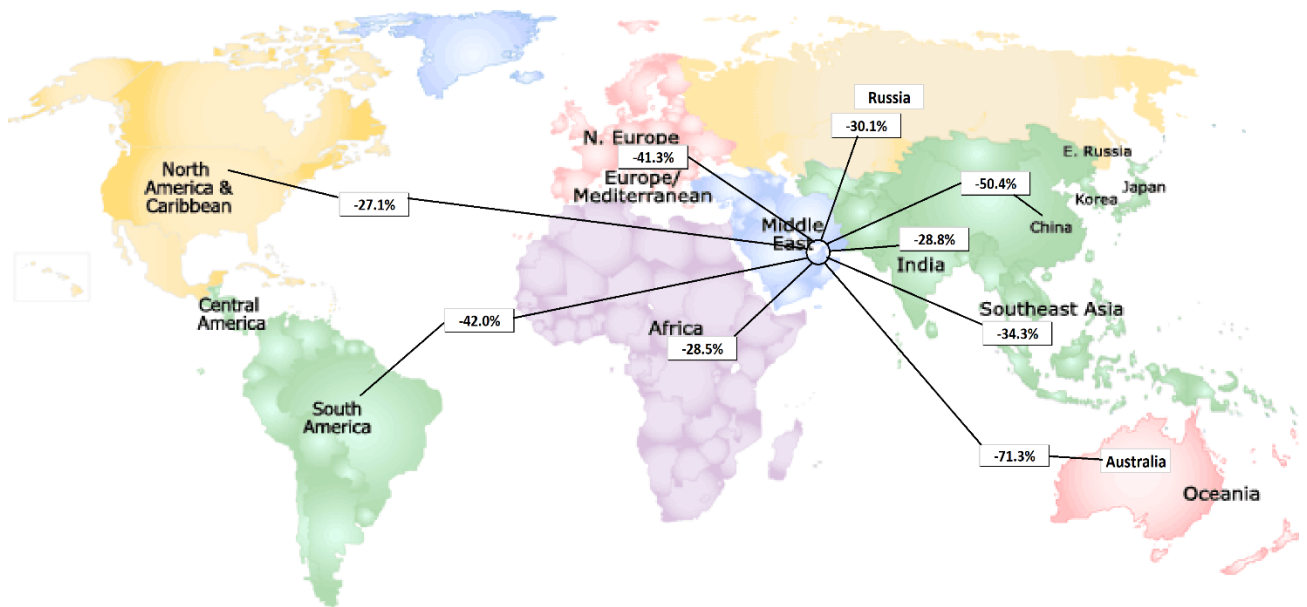
2.3 Different to passenger flights the cargo flights were not restricted by the pandemic measures. This demonstrated the importance of air traffic as a crucial enabler of global trade. This led to the affect that many wide-bodied passenger aircrafts were flying as cargo flights without passengers, but to transport cargo as belly freight. As a consequence, the number of declared cargo flights multiplied immediately as a response to the drop of passenger flights. As passenger traffic numbers recovered the number of pure cargo flights decreased again.



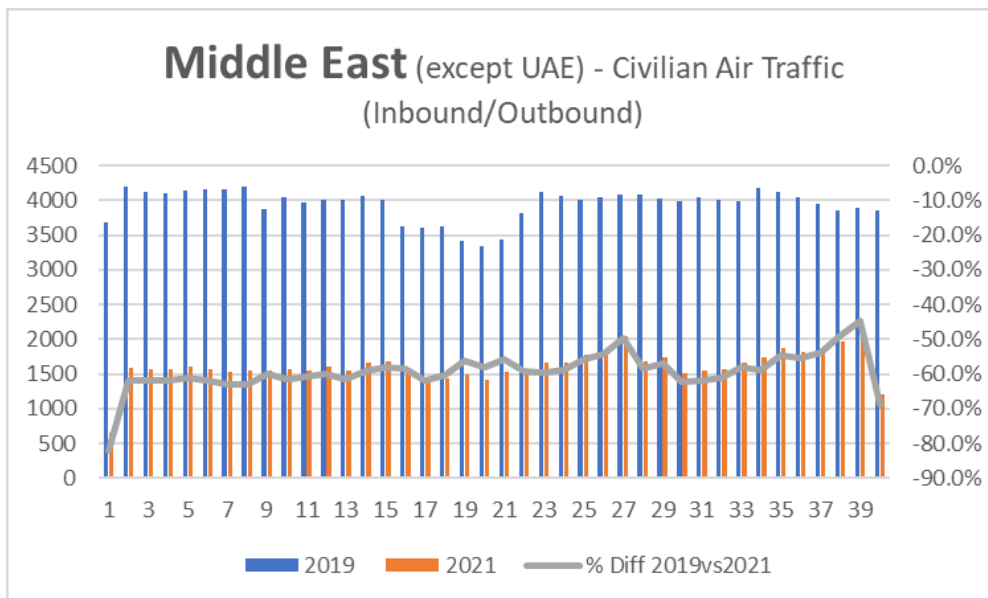
2.4 The air traffic recovered depending on the different regions and the travel restrictions that were in place at different times in response to the outbreaks of different local COVID-19 waves.

2.5 Overall the major UAE air traffic flows are to the North America, Africa, Asia (except Southeast Asia), Russia, Southeast Asia, Europe and South America.

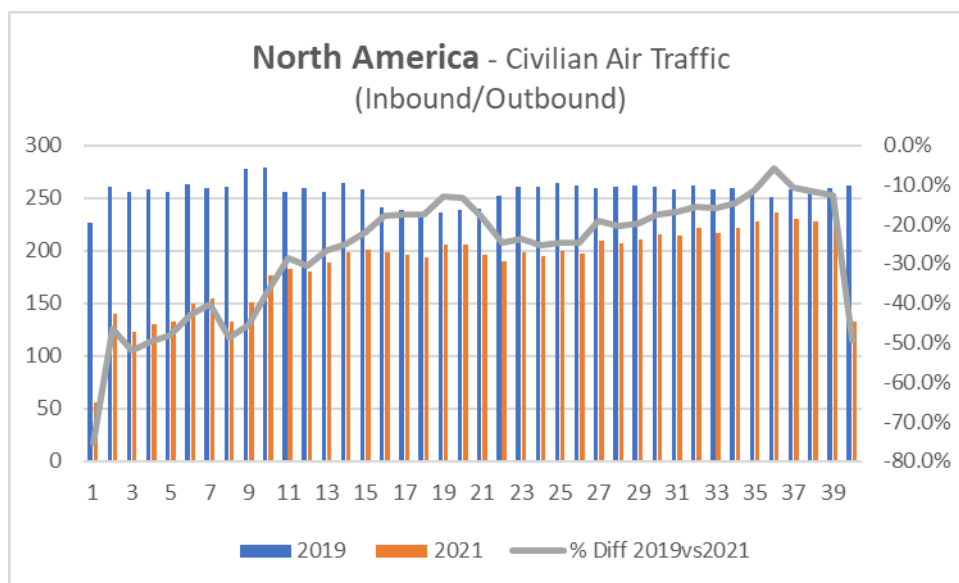
2.6 Top 3 regions with the best recovery to date in comparison to 2019 are North America (-27.1%), Africa (-28.5%) and Asia (except Southeast Asia) (-28.8%).



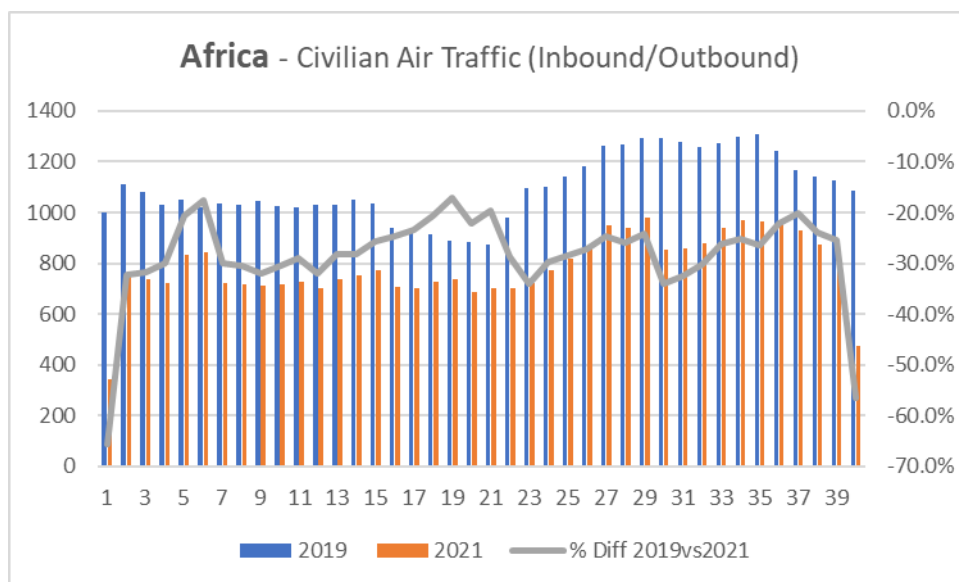
2.7 In the Middle East region, one of its countries re-authorized its flights to travel to UAE on September 2021 (calendar week 38) and continued its growth from then.



2.8 North America topped the recovery growth percentage rising to -27.1% until September 2021. Countries like United States of America and Canada were in the green list to fly into/from UAE. The outlook for the region is positive.

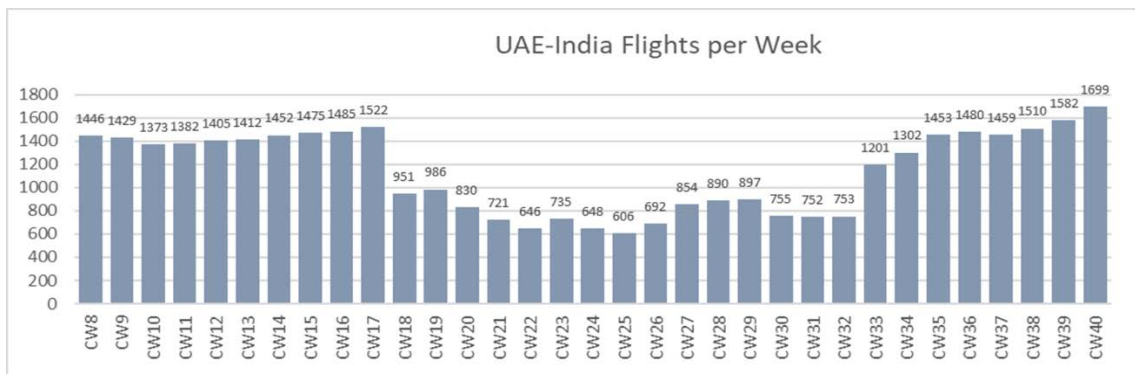
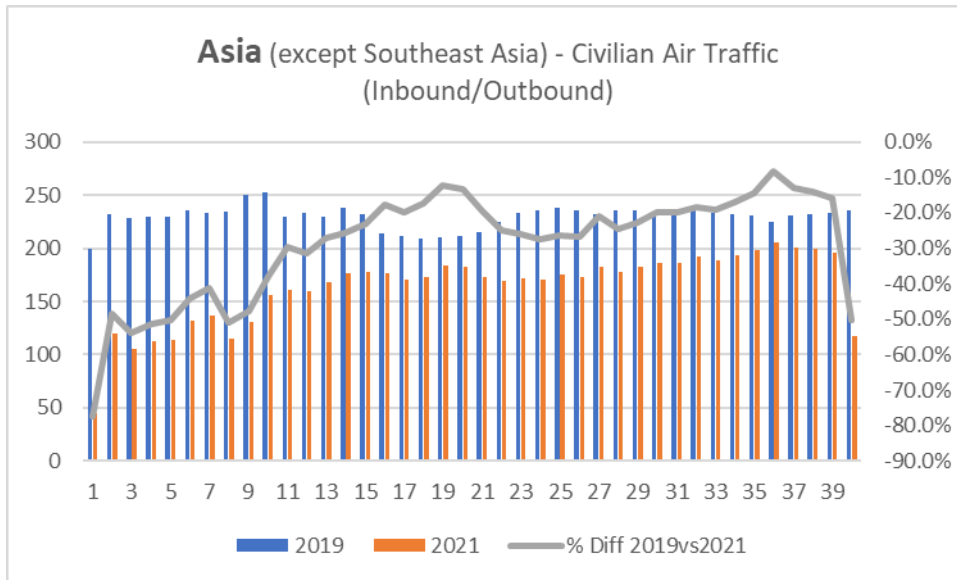


2.9 On 31 August 2021 (calendar week 35) – ICAO’s Africa-Middle East Air Transport Symposium concluded with renewed regional commitments on addressing pandemic recovery efforts, the harmonization of regional air transport regulatory frameworks, cross-border investments in airlines, the impact of levies and charges on air transport sustainability brought air travellers consciousness to travel by air.



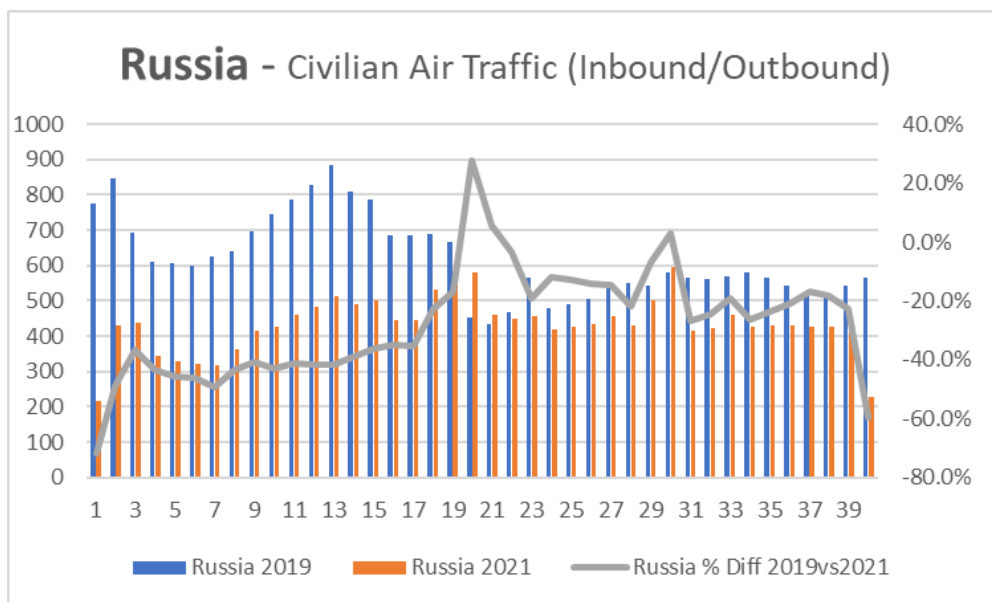
2.10 For Asia (except Southeast Asia) Region’s top air transport contributor countries India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh’s biggest international destination travel restriction were imposed starting from 25 April 2021(calendar week 18) due to the unfolding COVID variants detected in India. Along with 38 other countries including the US and the UK, had previously put a travel ban on India.

2.11 Passenger traffic between India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal & Bangladesh and UAE have considerably improved since the lifting of pandemic-triggered travel restrictions on 6 August 2021(calendar week 32).

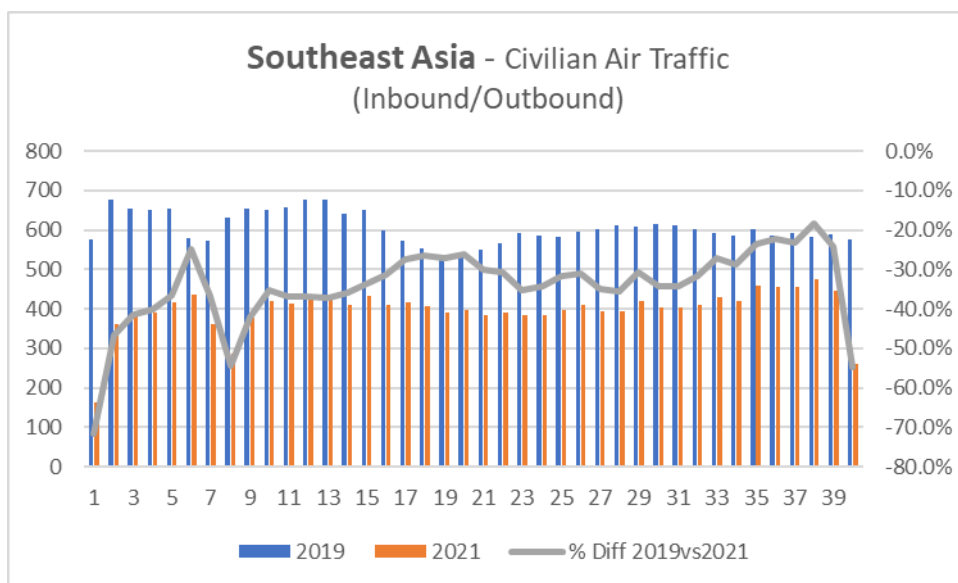


2.12 Russia and the UAE have strengthened diplomatic relations in recent years. Since a mutual exemption of visa requirements came into force in February 2019 and an agreement to boost air traffic to different cities within the two countries on October 2019, flights were in potential growth until the spike in Covid-19 cases in the world's largest country on June 2021(calendar week 23).

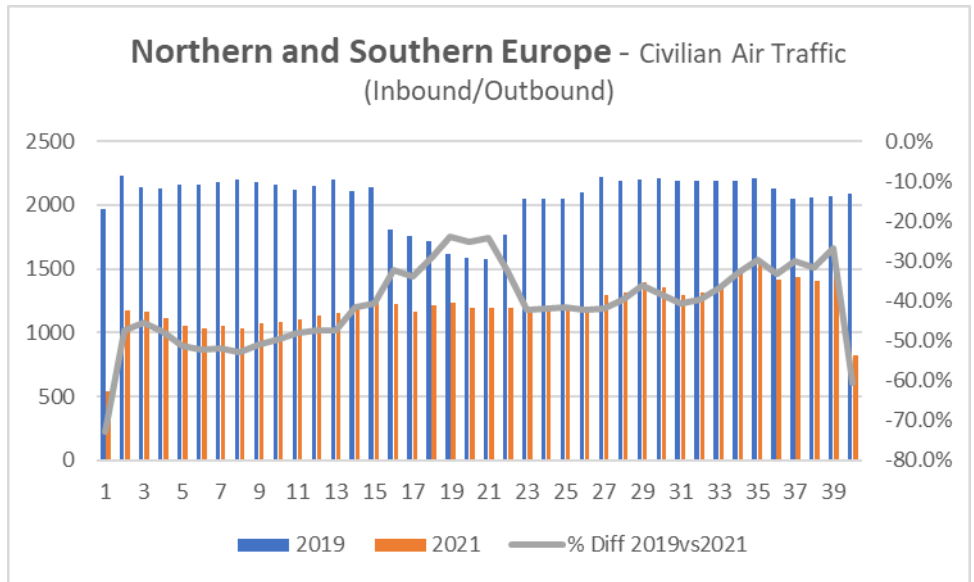
2.13 A potential growth is expected before the year 2021 ends since a new UAE based operator will add its first Russian destination — Moscow — to its route network.



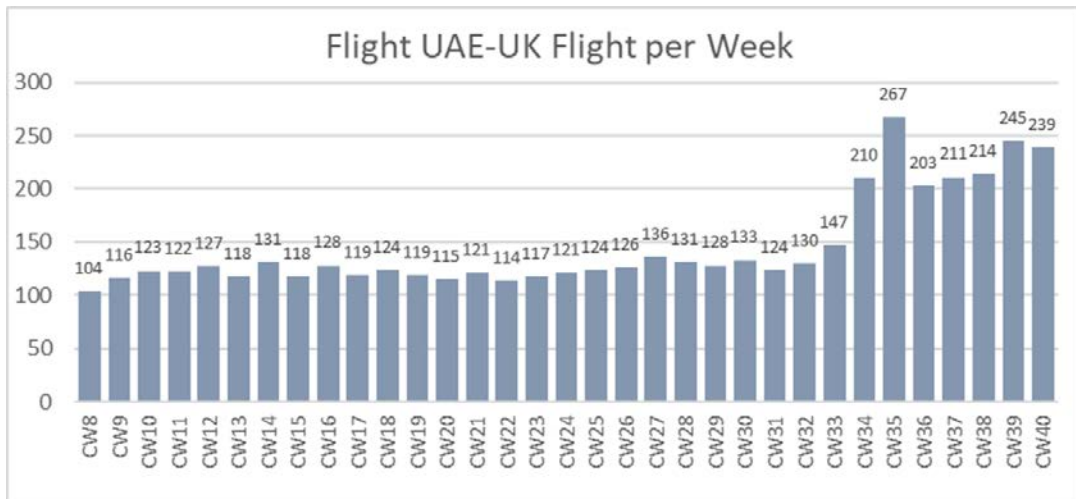
2.14 Data, traffic numbers have steadily returned following the end of travel restrictions. The UAE updated its green list to Southeast Asian countries on August 2021 (calendar week 32).



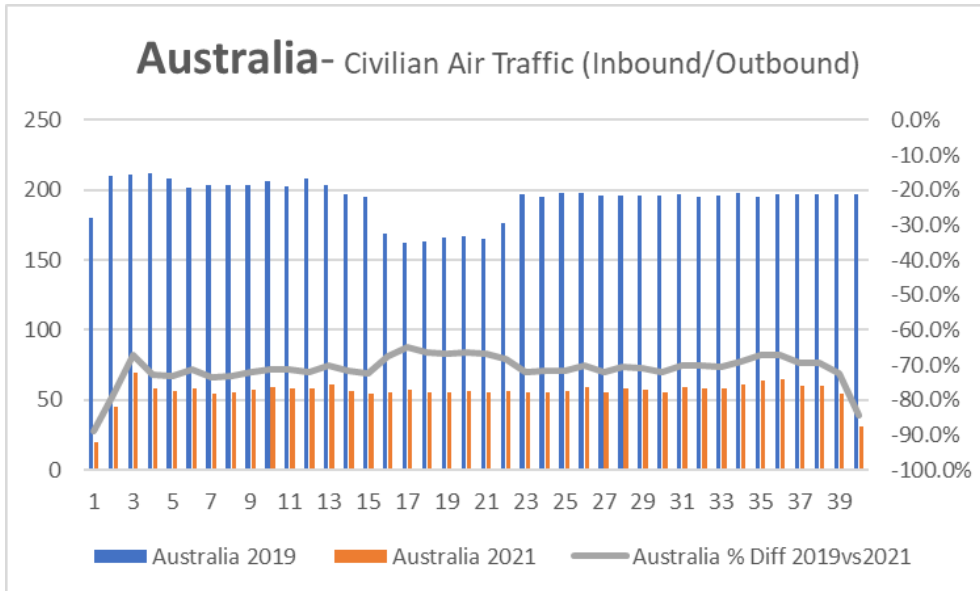
2.15 The recovery in Europe’s air traffic has hit a new milestone as people take to the skies again. After a continuous increase since mid of August (calendar week 33), the traffic is slightly increasing since then.



2.16 On 8 August 2021(calendar week 33), the UK has finally taken the UAE off its travel red list (countries from where travel is banned) and is expected to return to its pre-ban traffic number. The UK airport activity, with exception of cargo, is moving in the right direction but recovery remains moderate.

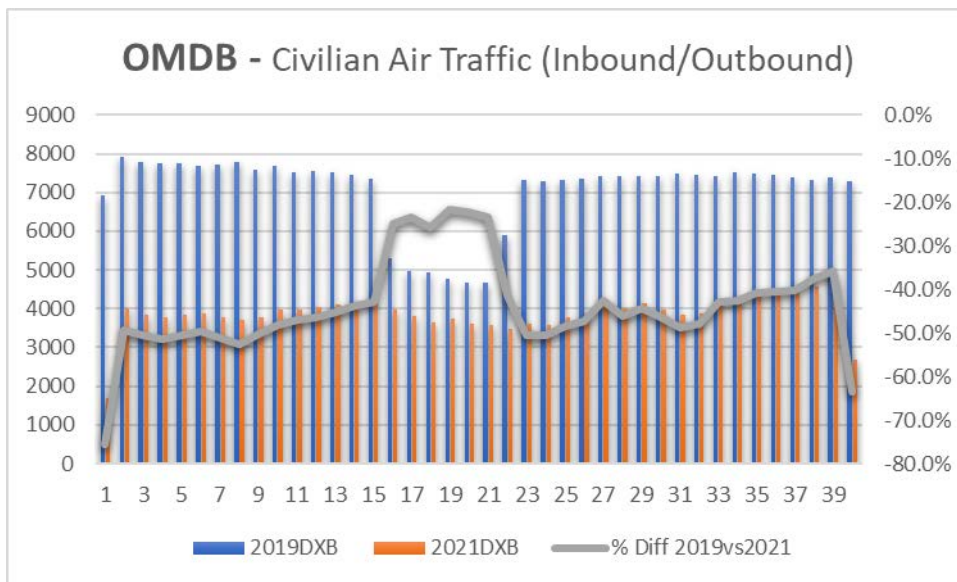


2.17 Australia was a case study for keeping Covid-19 at bay, however, the recent rise in cases and lack of vaccination progress highlights the fragility of the travel industry. With its largest airline standing down staff, the immediate outlook does not look positive, and it will take time for domestic demand to return.

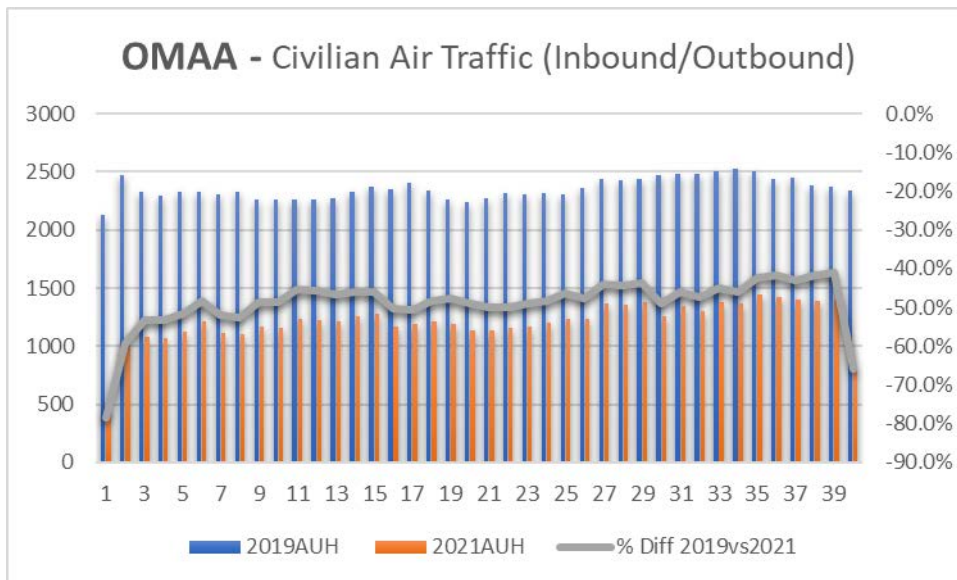


2.18 The 3rd quarter of year 2021 is quite resilient that noticeable growth of Air traffic came in the picture. Many air travel restrictions have been lifted and the confidence in air transportation has been regained.

2.19 After an unprecedented year, Dubai International Airport made positive strides towards recovery. A positive second half of the year, after a difficult second quarter, Dubai has a potential in leading dashboard recovery.



2.20 In Abu Dhabi, the level of traffic is still substantially below that of this time last 2019 however; the number of flights is gradually growing as lockdowns are eased around the world.



3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the progress of traffic recovery in the UAE as part of the MID region following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- b) encourage the States to share the traffic developments to plan for growing air traffic demand as the recovery continues.

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