



## ICAO assisting with humanitarian flight operations during COVID-19

For immediate release

**Montréal, 25 March 2020** – As part of its ongoing efforts in the global response to COVID-19, ICAO has taken action to assist the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), managed by the World Food Programme (WFP), as it continues to try to deliver reliable and effective passenger and light cargo transport during the COVID-19 pandemic in support of wide-ranging humanitarian goals.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres recently drew attention to the fact that the COVID-19 virus “does not care about nationality or ethnicity, faction or faith. It attacks all, relentlessly.” He underscored that as armed conflicts still rage around the world, “the most vulnerable — women and children, people with disabilities, the marginalized and the displaced — pay the highest price.”

With WFP facing difficulties in keeping abreast of global airport closures, posing risks to the reliable transport of relief staff and supplies, ICAO assisted with a new app it had already been developing to monitor government aeronautical information for up-to-the-minute airport closure updates.

ICAO’s Regional Offices have been actively coordinating with WFP counterparts and have been assisting with their efforts to expand MEDEVACS capacity globally and to establish seven dependable hub airports to support its worldwide humanitarian flight operations.

With respect to developing States especially, ICAO is requesting its Member States to assure continued operations and access for all UNHAS evacuation and humanitarian services.

It is also recommending that while applying necessary movement protocols to humanitarian flight crews, States should avoid taking these urgently-needed personnel out of service by placing them under quarantine for extended periods.

National aviation authorities have also been asked to expedite matters relating to the expiration of personnel licenses, and coordination with national flight planning and advisory services.

Aircraft operations for WFP and others are also dependant on a reliable supply of spare parts for standard maintenance requirements, and accordingly ICAO is also drawing State attention to the need for special clearances for spare part shipments by their customs and border control personnel.

“UNHAS operations are critical to many citizens and societies no matter the global situation, and in many instances they are the only option for getting supplies to the world’s most remote and challenging locations,” noted ICAO Secretary General Dr. Fang Liu. “As we work together to respond to a global pandemic they become even more important, however, and therefore throughout the COVID-19 pandemic we’re calling on governments to be cognizant and proactive in assuring and supporting these vital air services.”



Photo WFP/Deborah Nguyen

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## Resources for Editors

### About ICAO

A specialized agency of the United Nations, ICAO was created in 1944 to promote the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation throughout the world. It sets standards and regulations necessary for aviation safety, security, efficiency, capacity and environmental protection, amongst many other priorities. The Organization serves as the forum for cooperation in all fields of civil aviation among its 193 Member States.

[ICAO information on COVID-19 Economic Impacts](#)

[ICAO COVID-19 online information portal](#)

[ICAO Facilitation website](#)

[CAPSCA Website COVID-19 area](#)

[Aviation benefits and their positive impact on UN SDG realization](#)

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