International
Civil Aviation
Organization

Organisation
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Международная
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Ref.:   AN 8/17-
        EC 2/76-   } 20/131
        EC 6/47-

15 December 2020

Subject: Proposed High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021)

Action required: a) note the decision of the Council on the convening of a High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021); and b) note the provisional agendas in the attachments and provide comments, if any, by 15 February 2021.

Sir/Madam,

1.   I have the honour to inform you that the Council, at the tenth meeting of its 221st Session on 18 November 2020, approved the convening of a High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021), which will be held in October 2021.

2.   With the provisional theme of "*One Vision for Air Transport 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) to strengthen State commitments to leading the recovery from the pandemic.

3.   Depending on the evolution of the situation, the Conference will be held as 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.

The confirmed dates and meeting schedule will be communicated by the end of May 2021.

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4.   With an emphasis on safety and facilitation, the Conference will consider a broad range of issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic response and the aviation sector recovery that are of common interest and pose challenges to aviation, transport and health authorities, border and custom agencies, tourism and travel sectors, and the industry stakeholders at large. To ensure the structured discussion will lead to concrete outcomes, the meeting will be divided into a Plenary Session (on the first day of the event) and two technical streams, one related to safety and the other related to facilitation.

5.   The provisional annotated agendas, detailing the proposed topics to be discussed, are presented in the attachments for your consideration. The Plenary Session will have a dedicated agenda on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on aviation, seeking to strengthen political commitments by States in leading a sustainable recovery, building resilience for aviation and elevating the priorities of aviation in the global, regional and national agendas (Attachment A refers). The format of the Plenary Session will be determined upon the finalization of the agenda. The Safety stream agenda items provided in Attachment B were developed based on the tentative agenda circulated under State letter AN 8/17-20/44. The Facilitation stream will consider agenda items provided in Attachment C.

6.   The Conference will be open to all Member States and attendance by senior officials in a decision-making capacity is desirable (C-DEC 210/06 refers) to achieve the projected outcomes of the Conference. Representatives from non-Member States and international organizations, as invited by the Council, may also participate in the meeting with observer status. The Conference will be conducted in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

7.   Member States wishing to submit comments on the provisional agendas should do so by 15 February 2021. The agenda will be finalized, taking into account comments received from States, and will be presented to Council for approval during its 222nd Session.

Accept, Sir/Madam, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Fang Liu
Secretary General

Enclosures:
    A — Provisional Agenda for the Plenary Session
    B — Provisional Agenda for the Safety Stream
    C — Provisional Agenda for the Facilitation Stream

ATTACHMENT A to State letter AN 8/17, EC 2/76, EC 6/47-20/131

PROVIONAL AGENDA FOR THE PLENARY SESSION:
POST-COVID-19 AVIATION ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

The COVID-19 pandemic is not only a health crisis; it is also an economic and financial crisis, having had a greater and longer-than-anticipated impact on the entire aviation ecosystem. The collapse in air traffic amid the lockdowns and travel restrictions has caused severe economic and financial strain on all stakeholders in the sector, significantly risking the viability of civil aviation industry worldwide. As the connectivity brought by air transport is at the heart of development of multiple sectors, the disruption in other sectors that are dependent on reliable air transport has far-reaching impact on global economy.

In time, economies will rebound; however, the road to a successful aviation recovery and building resilience remains challenging. As a matter of urgency, effective and coordinated global effort is required to tackle continuous economic, financial and operational challenges confronted by the aviation industry and to restore the economic growth of the sector. Beyond the current recovery efforts, States and industry also need to learn lessons from this crisis to make aviation more resilient and to prepare a proper response to "build-back" better from the "new normal" or the transformation of the economic and operational environment.

Objectives[1]

Recalling aviation's contribution towards national, regional and global priorities, the Plenary Session will focus on the COVID-19 impact on aviation so as to set up political commitments by States to: a) leading sustainable economic recovery of civil aviation, including full resumption of travel, trade and global supply chains to pre-crisis level and growth; and b) building foundation to strengthen resilience in aviation and make it stronger in the future. Ministers, heads of international and regional organizations, as well as industry leaders will be provided with opportunities to demonstrate their individual and collective efforts to navigate a full post-COVID-19 recovery and to plan for future crises.

Format[2]

This Plenary Session will be structured with dynamic and open discussion among Ministers, heads of international and regional organizations, as well as with industry leaders, to achieve tangible results, including the issuance of an Outcome Statement to the public. There will be no keynote remarks and statements. While all the participants can listen to the Plenary Session, interventions will be restricted exclusively for Ministers, Deputy Ministers, heads of international and regional organizations, and those who are specifically invited to this session.

Topics of the Session

Following the review of the latest information concerning the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on air transport (including the near-term outlook and the long-term traffic forecasts), the discussion will be oriented around two pertinent topics that require a global response and strong political support, i.e. leading sustainable recovery and building resilience. At the end of the session, the Outcome Statement will be reviewed and adopted to reinforce the commitments agreed at the session.

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[1] Paragraph 3 e) and h) of C-SRN 2020/1, paragraph 5 of C-SRN 20202, Section 4. Building Resilience (High-level commitments) of CART Report, and paragraph 4.1.4 of Oral CART Report dated 4 November 2020 refer.

[2] Description is based on a ministerial roundtable format. The format will be determined upon the finalization of the agenda.

a) Review of economic impact, outlook and forecasts

b) Topic 1. Leading sustainable recovery

  - What recovery goals should the government set for short-, mid- and long-term and what is expected from ICAO in harmonizing these goals globally?
  - What kind of financial or regulatory support measures, as well as international frameworks, are most needed to help the industry recovery and to restore air connectivity?
  - In providing financial or regulatory support for the industry recovery, what is the best course of actions that the government can take to minimize market distortion?
  - Which measures can be taken by government in coordination with the industry to strengthen consumer confidence in air travel after the relaxation and/or lifting of travel restrictions?
  - How can the government ensure its effective oversight capability and capacity of oversight mechanisms when facing under-recovery from user charges and overall decrease of government tax revenues?

c) Topic 2. Building resilience

  - How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed and is perceived to further transform global aviation in response to the changing consumer behaviours and economy?
  - What will be the priority of the government and ICAO to make civil aviation more resilient to future outbreaks and ever-changing business environment without creating economic burdens?
  - What criteria can the government use to prioritize financial resources for building civil aviation viability and resilience, taking into account of the competing and/or conflicting spending priorities?
  - What kind of role can the government play in leveraging the use of digitalization and innovation as an enabling technology force for building resilience?
  - How can the government make aviation regulatory processes and governance more streamlined and responsive to future such events, including emergency response?

d) Review and adoption of the Outcome Statement

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PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE SAFETY STREAM

Member States and appropriate international organizations were consulted on the convening of the Third High-level Safety Conference (HLSC 2021) through State letter AN 8/17-19/84, dated 18 November 2019, which presented an initial list of indicative subjects for consideration at HLSC 2021. Comments from States and appropriate international organizations regarding content and priorities for HLSC 2021 were reviewed by the Air Navigation Commission (ANC) at the third meeting of its 214th Session on 14 May 2020. As a result, the tentative agenda for HLSC 2021, as approved in principle by the ANC, was circulated via State letter AN 8/17-20/44.

Following the decision of the Council to convene a single high-level conference (221-10), the ANC, at the thirteenth meeting of its 215th Session on 26 November 2020, approved the provisional agenda for the Safety stream as provided in this Attachment. The provisional agenda was derived from the content of previously approved HLSC 2021 agenda and took into account the needs identified by States and international organizations during the consultation process for the HLSC 2021 and relevance as a result of the COVID-19 contingency. Agenda items that had been removed will be addressed by alternate means.

Agenda Item 1:   Safety and operational measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic

The global air transport has been detrimentally affected by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The Conference will consider safety and operational challenges associated with the pandemic, the establishment of contingency arrangements by States, lessons learnt and how to plan for mitigating the effects of a similar occurrence in the future.

The Conference will be invited to put forward recommendations on planning and putting safety and operational mitigating measures in case of wide-scale disruptions.

Agenda Item 2:   Strategy and policy

2.1: Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP), and implementation of regional and national aviation safety plans

2.2: Evolving regulatory capacity in aviation

Under this agenda item, the Conference will discuss evolving safety strategy and policy. The *Global Aviation Safety Plan* (GASP, Doc 10004) sets forth the global strategic direction for aviation safety and provides the framework in which regional, sub-regional and national implementation plans are developed and implemented, thus ensuring harmonization and coordination of efforts aimed at improving international civil aviation safety.

The Conference will also consider the evolution in aviation and how to enhance regulatory capacity, training approaches, current processes and procedures to ensure safe development of civil aviation in view of introduction of innovations, new technologies and concepts of operation, new business models and traffic growth.

The Conference will be invited to put forward recommendations on:

a) a global strategic direction for aviation safety;
b) strategic planning in managing aviation safety and responding to new challenges at the national level; and
c) how to enhance training and improve current processes and procedures (including licensing, certification, authorizations and approvals) to embrace rapid changes in aviation.

Agenda Item 3: Standardization

3.1: Oversight and new approaches
3.2: Risk management
3.3: Ground handling

The Conference will consider a new concept of "cooperative" oversight. "Cooperative" oversight aims to address the growth of cross-border operations, new business models, operational and training approaches, and technological developments while ensuring that all Member States effectively fulfill their safety oversight functions and responsibilities.

Given the rapidly evolving aviation system, which becomes ever more complex and interconnected, the Conference will discuss new challenges associated with the evolution in aviation as well as those related to the transport of dangerous goods, risks generated by passengers, new types of aircraft and other new entrants. The Conference will consider the safety aspects as a precursor to developing procedures in response to the detection of an unauthorized unmanned aircraft, particularly in the vicinity of an aerodrome.

The Conference will also discuss ground handling which is of increasing importance to safety, regularity, efficiency and performance of airport operations, and there is a need for a standardized oversight approach for ground handling activities.

The Conference will be invited to put forward recommendations on:

a) how challenges and risks associated with the evolution in aviation can be effectively managed to minimize adverse consequences;
b) the standardized oversight approach for ground handling activities; and
c) how to ensure effective "cooperative" oversight while ensuring that all Member States will be able to effectively fulfil their safety oversight functions and responsibilities.

Agenda Item 4: Implementation and support

ICAO and Member States need to find ways to adapt to the rapid pace of evolution in aviation and the ever-increasing needs of the global aviation community. Expanding existing partnerships and a proactive engagement with industry will be essential. Regional collaboration has proven to be beneficial for improving global aviation safety through regional safety oversight organizations (RSOOs), cooperative development of operational safety and continuing airworthiness programmes (COSCAPs) and regional accident and incident investigation organizations (RAIOs). With the launch of the Global Aviation Safety Oversight System (GASOS), ICAO is working to further enhance and strengthen these regional

mechanisms by assessing their capability to perform specific functions and activities requested by their Member States. The Conference will provide a forum for discussion on how to enhance regional implementation support mechanisms to assist States in accomplishing certain safety oversight, accident and incident investigation and safety management functions and activities.

The Conference will be invited to put forward recommendations on:

a) improving global aviation safety through RSOOs, COSCAPs and RAIOs; and

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

Agenda Item 5: Other issues to be considered by the Safety stream

This item is intended for subjects, other than those that have a specific agenda item, which require the consideration of the Conference and that have not already been specifically dealt with by recommendations of past divisional-type meetings or action taken by the ICAO Council.

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PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE FACILITATION STREAM

Background

In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, a dedicated ad hoc taskforce, the Task Force on Health Issues Outbreaks in Aviation, was established in May 2020. Its mandate is to review all health-related Annex 9 — *Facilitation* provisions and corresponding guidance material, which are designed to provide the effective measures for States to implement through aviation authorities with requirements for aircraft and airport operators. The Task Force's recommendations will be considered by the Council in June 2021.

The Facilitation-related recommendations of the Council's Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) Phase I and II reports and annexed guidance document highlighted the importance of national coordination between the different stakeholders involved in the crisis management, the appropriate handling of unruly passenger situations and the increased use of advanced technologies to facilitate contactless processing of passengers at various stages of their journey.

Following the decision of the Council, the provisional agenda for the Facilitation stream is derived from content of the previously proposed High-level Facilitation Conference (HLFC 2021) agenda (C-WP/15107 refers), keeping the needs identified by the Facilitation Panel (FALP) in the consultation process for the HLFC 2021 and still relevant as a result of the COVID-19 contingency. Removed agenda items will be addressed by alternate means and notably by FALP/12 in July 2021.

Agenda Item 1:   Facilitation operational measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic

      1.1 Air Transport Committee's Task Force on Health Issues Outbreaks in Aviation
      1.2 CART report and associated guidance related to Facilitation matters

The Conference will consider the Facilitation operational challenges associated with the pandemic, the management and establishment of adapted Facilitation measures enabling the sustainability of international air transport operations and ensuring a continuous passenger confidence in health-related measures applied in the air travel journey continuum. The Conference will discuss the recommendations proposed by the Task Force on Health Issues Outbreaks in Aviation. As the world moves beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, States will look to implement risk mitigation measures to reduce the likelihood that passengers arriving at airports are carriers of COVID-19.

The Conference will be invited to put forward recommendations on planning and implementing Facilitation operational mitigating measures in case of wide-scale disruptions, including:

- logistical problems linked to vaccine distribution;
- vaccination requirements and associated certificates of vaccination or prophylaxis;
- health clearance border and related-control services; and

- facilities required in air transport infrastructures for implementation of public health measures.

Agenda Item 2: **Enhancing National Coordination and International Cooperation**

    2.1 National aviation plan in preparation for an outbreak of a communicable disease posing a public health risk or public health emergency of international concern

    2.2 National Air Transportation Facilitation Programmes and National Air Transport Facilitation Committees (NATFCs)

    2.3 Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA)

The establishment of different contingency arrangements by States, the lessons learnt and the preparedness plans to mitigate the effects of a similar occurrence in the future will be discussed, including the importance of a close coordination approach between the National Air Transport Facilitation Programme and Committees and the ICAO Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA) Programme. The Conference will also consider how the air transport system and related processes through a travel journey could be more resilient against threats by having appropriate countermeasures and recognizing the value that exercises can bring to ensuring well-executed recovery plans.

The Conference will be invited to make recommendations on:

a) a systematic implementation of National Air Transport Facilitation Committees (NATFCs);

b) continued and enhanced support of the CAPSCA Programme including existing activities as well as future projects and developments;

c) good practices to consider, in particular regarding:
    i. preparation and implementation of emergency plans at national level;
    ii. coordination of implementation of all necessary response measures identified by a national aviation plan in preparation for an outbreak of a communicable disease; and
    iii. the collection of passenger public health declaration forms; and

d) proposed new material on disinsection, disinfection, emergency medical relief, relief flights, passengers and cargo quarantine measures and consumable products and waste in airports.

Agenda Item 3: **Enhancing digital data sharing to facilitate seamless and contactless processes during and beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic**

    3.1 Sharing passengers' identity information across borders to facilitate contactless travel

    3.2 Development of ICAO IT Services in the Facilitation field

    3.3 Collection of passenger contact and health data through electronic travel systems

The Conference will consider strategies for enhancing the use of electronic Machine Readable Travel Document (eMRTD) solutions with a view towards facilitation of contactless travel processes. In that context, the Conference will discuss the development of a roadmap for an electronic Passport (ePassport) Standard in Annex 9. In an increasingly digitalized world, developments in the role of

the ICAO Public Key Directory (PKD), the ICAO Digital Travel Credential (DTC) and the benefits of developing ICAO's IT capabilities to support States' implementation of technology associated to some related Annex 9 Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs), will also be discussed. To facilitate the recovery of aviation, the application of border control and entry requirements should be as uniform and globally interoperable as possible.

Amendment 28 to ICAO Annex 9 incorporated new and revised Passenger Name Record (PNR) data Standards on the collection, use, processing and protection of PNR data, in line with United Nations (UN) Security Council resolution 2396 (2017). In order to assist States in their implementation of Advance Passenger Information (API) and PNR programmes worldwide, the UN Countering Terrorist Travel Programme, a flagship initiative, was set-up to support States in their capacity-building efforts. The collection of passenger contact information is considered as an important measure to support the ability of public health authorities to trace passengers and thus help to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The Conference will be invited to make recommendations on:

a) the collection of passenger contact information using electronic travel systems;
b) ways to enhance cross-border collaboration in data sharing for contactless travel; and
c) the generalized use of existing ICAO eMRTDs specifications for contactless processes.

Agenda Item 4: **Future approaches to the management of sustainable health-related Facilitation measures for the passenger experience and advancing the implementation monitoring**

4.1 Management of unruly passengers
4.2 Accessibility in aviation for passenger with disabilities
4.3 Monitoring the implementation of Annex 9 SARPs
4.4 Promoting facilitation culture
4.5 Fostering resilience of air transport facilitation systems and processes

The Conference will consider developments related to unruly passengers and advancing accessibility in aviation for persons with disabilities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The requirements for States to deter and prevent unruly behaviour and to ensure that relevant personnel are provided training to identify and manage unruly passenger situations related to non-respect of essential aviation public health measures will be discussed.

Regarding the monitoring of the implementation of Annex 9 SARPs, it is noteworthy that currently only the security-related Standards and communicable disease processes contained in Annex 9 – *Facilitation* are audited under, respectively, the Universal Security Audit Programme Continuous Monitoring Approach (USAP-CMA) and the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme Continuous Monitoring Approach (USOAP-CMA). The Conference will consider the evaluation of the level of implementation of Annex 9 SARPs through the completion of the Annex 9 compliance checklist (CC) in the Electronic Filing of Differences (EFOD) System, and through the results of the Safety and Security audit Programmes.

The Conference will discuss ways to ensure the promotion of effective facilitation culture across all States and within every organization, which would contribute to managing more efficiently future challenges and transformations to civil aviation and other potential challenges.

Finally, in order to ensure the sustainability of ICAO's facilitation initiatives in the context of the demonstrated economic importance of such activities in times of volatility, the Conference will consider the continuing need for financial and in-kind contributions to supplement ICAO Regular Programme Budget funds. Meeting these needs will be vital to ensure that maximum efforts are made to assist States in overcoming Annex 9 implementation challenges during health outbreaks.

The Conference will be invited to make recommendations on:

a) innovative approaches to address acts of unruly passengers brought about by measures that have been put it place to stop the spread of communicable diseases;

b) measures addressing the need to advance accessibility in aviation for persons with disabilities in times of abnormal processes, such as during health-related pandemics;

c) a better monitoring of the implementation of Annex 9 provisions; and

d) appropriate allocation of resources to air transport facilitation in order to reduce the lack of implementation by States of the health-related Annex 9 provisions.

Agenda Item 5:   Other topics to be considered by HLCC 2021

This item is intended for subjects, other than those that have a specific agenda item, which require the consideration of the Conference and that have not already been specifically dealt with by recommendations of past FALP meetings or actions taken by the ICAO Council and Assembly.

— END —