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Международная
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Subject: Maintaining efficient air cargo operations during the COVID-19 pandemic

Action required: a) adhere to ICAO Standards contained in Annexes 6, 9, 17 and 18; b) note and consider actions called on by Joint Statements; and c) follow guidance included in Docs 10102 and 10147 to facilitate the transport of vaccines and components thereof

Sir/Madam,

1. I have the honour to bring your attention to the critical role of the global supply chain in the public health, global food security and economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, which was highlighted in State letters 20/46 and 20/47 dated 18 and 20 March 2020 respectively, as well as in Electronic Bulletins on the Public Health Corridor (PHC) concept (EB 2020/30 and 36 refer).

2. Recalling the need to ensure the sustainability of the global supply chain, I wish to once again urge States to adhere to ICAO Standards contained in Annex 9 – *Facilitation* and other relevant Annexes to the *Convention on International Civil Aviation*, and encourage them to implement the PHC concept for “COVID-19-free” air cargo operations. It is also imperative that States and industry make continued efforts to ensure the effective implementation of air cargo security measures prescribed in Chapter 4.6 of Annex 17 – *Security*. Relevant guidance can be found in the *Aviation Security Manual* (Doc 8973) and the *Guidelines on Aviation Security Contingency Measures During the Pandemic*.

3. As the global supply chain relies on the smooth flow of goods among different modes of transport, ICAO has engaged in close collaboration with the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations in the areas of international trade and cargo. Your attention is drawn to the following calls:

- a) *Joint Statement with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO)*¹ in May 2020, which encouraged States to facilitate crew changes and operations (as well as the provision of air traffic and aerodrome services) essential to maintain global supply chains and operations related to humanitarian aid, medical and relief flights, by exempting “key workers” from travel

¹ <https://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/ICAO-ILO-and-IMO-issue-joint-call-to-world-governments-on-need-for-key-worker-designations-for-essential-air-and-sea.aspx>

and other restrictions, where applicable and while complying with international safety and employment regulations;

- b) *Joint Statement with the Universal Postal Union (UPU)*² in September 2020, which encouraged States to support their designated postal operators, air cargo carriers, and express mail operators during the crisis through assistance and operational flexibility, and improve supply chain resiliency and dependability through “digitalization”; and
- c) *Joint Statement with the IMO, UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and five UN Economic Commissions on the Contribution of International Trade and Supply Chains to a Sustainable Socioeconomic Recovery in COVID-19 Times*³ in September 2020, which called upon States, inter alia, to take a risk-based approach to restoring connectivity with minimal restrictions, support further “digitalization” of trade and customs procedures, and implement recommendations and guidelines of the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART).

4. Your attention is also drawn to a letter from the UN Secretary General to Heads of State (27 April 2020), calling for the facilitation of humanitarian flights and access for humanitarian personnel and cargo. By enhancing the information flow between aviation and humanitarian stakeholders, planning and operating efforts can be optimized. This is a pre-requisite to prompt recovery, especially when the outbreak of natural disasters would add complexity to COVID-19 crisis response logistics.

5. We are expanding our collaboration with the United Nations and other international organizations to help facilitate the transport of vaccines or components thereof, which could include infectious substances and/or refrigerants and thus call for adherence to Standards contained in Annex 18 – *Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air*, as well as Annex 6 – *Operation of Aircraft - Part I - International Commercial Air Transport – Aeroplanes*. Attention is drawn to recently published documents; i.e. *Guidance for Safe Operations Involving Aeroplane Cargo Compartments* (Doc 10102) and *Guidance on a Competency-based Approach to Dangerous Goods Training and Assessment* (Doc 10147).

6. A post-COVID-19 recovery, including full resumption of trade and the return to economic growth, will only be possible through the rapid worldwide network and connectivity provided by aviation, which contributes to achieving the United Nations *Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

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

Fang Liu
Secretary General

² <https://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/ICAO-UPU-urge-national-commitments-and-support--for-postal-air-cargo-and-express-mail-operators.aspx>

³ <https://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/Sustainable-and-resilient-supply-chains-crucial-to-COVID19-recovery.aspx>