



International
Civil Aviation
Organization

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de l'aviation civile
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Organización
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Международная
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Subject: Ministerial Declaration of the High-level
Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021)

Action required: a) note the Ministerial
Declaration and Chair's Summary; and b) consider
the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration

Sir/Madam,

1. I have the honour to inform you that the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021) was successfully held from 12 to 22 October 2021. During the conference, a total of 56 ministers and deputy ministers from 52 Member States, as well as 24 heads of invited international organizations, attended the three Ministerial Plenary Sessions (Round Tables I and II, and Closing).
2. The record-high attendance by ministers and deputy ministers has demonstrated their recognition of ICAO's leading role in the transport portfolio and advanced the profile of the aviation agenda at the political level. Highlights of the discussions during the Ministerial Plenary Round Tables I and II on 12 and 13 October 2021 were captured in the Chair's Summary, which is presented in **Attachment A**.
3. At the Ministerial Plenary (Closing) on 22 October 2021, ministers and deputy ministers reviewed and adopted the Ministerial Declaration on "One Vision for Aviation Recovery, Resilience and Sustainability beyond the Global Pandemic". The Declaration is published on the conference website at: <https://www.icao.int/Meetings/HLCC2021/Pages/ministerial-plenary.aspx> and is presented in **Attachment B**. The adopted Declaration has reflected comments in response to State letter 2021/61 dated 20 September 2021 and discussions made during the Ministerial Plenary Sessions. While the Declaration is not a legally binding document, it demonstrates solidarity and determination, and conveys a strong political message to international communities and world economies.

4. States are encouraged to follow and implement the Ministerial Declaration in coordination with ICAO Regional Offices, according to their specific needs and circumstances. States facing particular circumstances or situations in relation to specific provisions of the Declaration are encouraged to submit a written statement to ministers@icao.int describing such situations.

5. As part of the support for States' implementation, the key elements of the Declaration will be incorporated into the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Implementation Centre (CRRIC). Continued efforts will be made to promote and raise awareness of the Declaration through dedicated webinars on the outcomes of the conference and at various ICAO events.

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

Juan Carlos Salazar
Secretary General

Enclosures:

A – Chair's Summary

B – Ministerial Declaration

ATTACHMENT A to State letter 21/70



Chair's Summary of Ministerial Plenary Round Tables I and II of the ICAO High-level Conference on COVID-19

The Ministers responsible for civil aviation/transport in Member States of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), as well as the invited Heads of international and industry organizations, gathered at the Ministerial Plenary (Round Tables I and II) from 12 to 13 October 2021 during the ICAO High-level Conference on COVID-19.

Participants held very fruitful discussions virtually over the two days on the two interrelated topics: leading aviation recovery (for Round Table I) and building resilience and sustainability (for Round Table II). The results of the two Round Table discussions were also considered in the preparation of the Ministerial Declaration, to be adopted at the Ministerial Plenary (Closing) on 22 October 2021.

This document captures, from my perspective as a Chairperson of the meeting, highlights of their discussions.

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At the outset, participants acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic is far more than a health crisis; it has caused immense economic and social distress throughout the globe. While aviation is one of the most heavily affected sectors, global supply chains, emergency and humanitarian responses and the swift vaccine distribution rely predominantly on air transport. Beyond that, aviation is a major economic enabler and catalyst with many sectors depending on the reliable and efficient air transport system.

A global crisis calls for a globally harmonized response. Participants commended the work of the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) and the Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA), and underlined the usefulness of recommendations and guidance provided to support their States' recovery efforts. The recommendations of particular mention included the Targeted Exemption system, the lifting of restrictions on air cargo, the establishment of Public Health Corridors, the implementation of testing certificates, and the need for fair and equitable treatment of passengers.

Recognizing the massive impact of the pandemic on the financial viability of the aviation sector, participants stressed the need to continue to provide adequate financial and regulatory support measures when deemed necessary. Such measures should be implemented in an inclusive, targeted, proportionate, transparent, and temporary manner, which shall preserve market dynamics and take into account international obligations. In the face of limited availability of resources for crisis response and competing

priorities, orchestrate efforts are required from all relevant entities, including financial institutions, international partners, and the private sector.

When a State is ready to adopt an “exit” strategy, i.e. a national-wide risk management strategy aimed at reducing the need for public health risk mitigation measures, opening up travel and reactivating local economies, the aviation sector requires particular attention. Confronting difficult trade-offs associated with health, economic and social challenges, the crucial role of aviation to support the fight against the pandemic and wider economic recovery should be taken into account. A shared view was expressed by participants as to the utmost importance of defining multilayer risk management strategies for international civil aviation which are adaptable, proportionate, non-discriminatory and guided by scientific evidence.

Restoring and strengthening passengers’ confidence in air travel is essential to the full resumption of travel, trade and supply chains and their post-pandemic growth. In this regard, a speedier and safer contactless travel should be promoted while satisfying public health measures and reducing risk of disease transmission. Participants highlighted the benefits of integrating automated and digitalized solutions in air transport operations to ensure fast and secure exchange of data and information. The interoperability and mutual recognition of, and accessibility to such solutions is a core enabling component for achieving this objective. In addition, new technologies can allow governments to develop consistent and agile response frameworks to future crises, including flight restrictions, crew treatment measures, passenger testing and vaccination requirements, travel health data exchange, and other emergency response.

Participants also discussed the emerging shifts engendered by the impact of the pandemic and highlighted their actions and initiatives to enhance the sustainability of aviation in all three aspects – social, environmental and economic. There was a shared view that lessons should be drawn from the current pandemic in order to reinforce the long-term foundation of the aviation sector against future threats, while acknowledging that every crisis holds an element of uncertainty and unpredictability. Moreover, they stressed the importance of strengthening the sectors’ flexibility and adaptability to the ongoing, long-term transformation of economies, society and consumer behaviours. States’ and ICAO’s key responsibility is to prepare a proper post-COVID-19 policy response, which will rely on improved risk management and crisis preparedness, underpinned by innovative solutions such as digitalization.

A significant component of the way forward will be the retention and attraction of qualified and competent aviation professionals to effectively respond to the ongoing change of economies, operations and business models, and for the sustainable growth of the aviation sector.

Collective engagement of States and industry serves as the main engine to navigate aviation through the course of recovery to resilience. Participants agreed to seize this opportunity to strengthen the international framework and arrangements for a coordinated and streamlined response to future crises, and to renew global intra- and cross-sectoral cooperation for more prompt and coordinated crisis management.

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I am very pleased to see the strong and robust unity of Ministers to address these challenges and to enable the swift but safe and efficient recovery of civil aviation. I highly appreciate the valuable contributions of participants.

ATTACHMENT B to State letter 21/70

Ministerial Declaration of the High-level Conference on COVID-19

“One Vision for Aviation Recovery, Resilience and Sustainability beyond the Global Pandemic”

(Adopted at the Ministerial Plenary (Closing) on 22 October 2021)

We, the Ministers;

- Recognizing the continued, unprecedented global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its serious public health, social and economic consequences;
- Recognizing also that the civil aviation sector is profoundly affected, including employment by renewed outbreaks and resulting travel restrictions, thus hampering global mobility, including of key air transport personnel as well as essential connectivity and supply chains, with a heavy strain on the global economy;
- Recognizing further the key role played by the operation of cargo air services, allowing for the global distribution of critical medical supplies and keeping the essential supply chains in operation;
- Underlining that ICAO’s top and immediate priority is to enhance the cooperation among States to enable the safe and efficient recovery of civil aviation while managing risks to public health;
- Stressing the need to ensure the resilience and sustainability of civil aviation as an irreversible path towards recovery, inclusive growth and addressing the climate change challenge;
- Emphasizing that all passengers should benefit from fair and equitable treatment and the ability to travel, and that vaccination is not a precondition for travel although it is highly desirable that it be used to safely facilitate mobility;
- Underlining that travelling solutions should be made available to or be appropriate for all passengers, taking into consideration access to and types of vaccines, so as to ensure that no country is left behind in the global aviation recovery effort;
- Recalling that all States are sovereign and responsible for their own domestic public health-related measures, and remain free to implement any risk mitigation measures if and when necessary, consistent with their national legislation and international obligations;
- Supporting the work of the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Taskforce (CART) and stressing the importance of common standards for travel, including interoperability and mutual recognition of digital applications, as well as the importance of drawing lessons from the current pandemic to better manage future crises; and
- Noting with appreciation the World Health Organization’s (WHO) partnership on public health risk management in the aviation sector throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, including on vaccine certification and considering the conclusions from the Safety and Facilitation Streams of the Conference;

Have adopted the following Declaration:

1. We welcome ICAO’s global leadership to facilitate aviation’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure its future resilience;

2. We commit to taking effective measures to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 and other communicable diseases by international air travel, in particular through the implementation of the ICAO CART guidelines, and encourage the harmonization of Member States' multilayer risk management strategies to safely restore international connectivity and support the revival of the global economy as a critical step towards achieving our goal to enhance the social, environmental and economic sustainability of aviation;
3. We also commit to a multilayer risk management strategy for international civil aviation, which is adaptable, proportionate, non-discriminatory and guided by scientific evidence in close cooperation and coordination with public health sector, with agreed practices harmonized to the greatest extent possible, for air travel purposes, using commonly accepted epidemiological criteria, testing requirements and vaccination, and underpinned by regular review, monitoring and timely information-sharing among States;
4. We will facilitate further the air transportation of vaccines as well as essential medical supplies and personnel in support of the global effort to combat the COVID-19 pandemic as well as other crises and emergencies, particularly to developing countries;
5. We confirm the importance of support provided for the aviation sector, including economic and financial support, to sustain operations and ensure the provision of essential services while safeguarding fair competition and equal opportunities;
6. We commit to ensuring a safe, secure, and orderly flow of traffic with operational readiness of aviation personnel, in particular aircrew and air traffic controllers, as well as the airworthiness of aircraft;
7. We will work with ICAO and other stakeholders to ensure the interoperability and mutual recognition of, and accessibility to, digital applications, secure transmission and validation of pandemic-related testing, vaccination and recovery certification that protects privacy and personal data;
8. We commit to promoting, to the greatest extent possible, a harmonized and inclusive approach to facilitate safe international air travel, including alleviating or exempting testing and/or quarantine requirements for fully vaccinated or recovered passengers, taking into account the different circumstances of individual States and their national policies, in keeping with WHO's policy and technical considerations for implementing a risk-based approach to international travel in the context of COVID-19¹, and providing exceptions for non-vaccinated passengers. This will enable us to work towards strengthening the confidence of the travelling public and safely rebuilding international civil aviation;
9. We commit to working with international partners to build upon ICAO and WHO guidance on the establishment of bilateral, regional or multilateral Public Health Corridors, or other types of agreements or arrangements to similar effect, in particular regarding the mutual recognition of vaccines, and incorporating additional risk mitigation as required;

¹ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Risk-based-international-travel-2021.1>, stating that "... national authorities in countries of destination ... may consider exempting from SARS-CoV-2 testing and/or quarantine requirements to incoming international travellers who:

- are fully vaccinated, meaning they have received the last recommended dose of a vaccine against COVID-19 listed by WHO for emergency use or approved by a stringent regulatory authority at least two weeks prior to travelling;
- have proof of previous SARS-CoV-2 infection confirmed by a real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (rRT-PCR) test received within the past 6 months and are no longer infectious as per WHO's criteria for releasing COVID-19 patients from isolation."

10. We welcome ICAO's work in close collaboration with WHO to provide guidance on an exit strategy from existing risk management measures as the pandemic retreats;
11. We commit to ensuring that ICAO is well positioned to support the long-term resilience of international aviation and incorporate the lessons learned from the current and past pandemics, by enhancing its crisis response capability, and regularly reviewing and updating ICAO's Standards and Recommended Practices and guidance materials as may be required;
12. We recognize the contribution of the aviation industry to climate change and the challenges posed by the latter to the long-term resilience, sustainable development and future growth of the aviation sector, as we look forward to the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP 26)² and the ICAO High-level Meeting to discuss the feasibility of a long-term global aspirational goal for international aviation³;
13. We further recognize the importance of developing mechanisms to assist and provide technical aviation support to States and their professionals in overcoming the COVID 19 pandemic leaving no one behind; and
14. We commit to uniting together to rebuild the aviation sector from the COVID-19 pandemic as soon as possible, and invite the 41st Session of the ICAO Assembly to review progress and determine further actions that may be needed.

— END —

² To be held in Glasgow, United Kingdom from 31 October to 12 November 2021.

³ To be held at ICAO from 20 to 22 July 2022.