

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

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."

or arrangements to similar effect, in particular regarding the mutual recognition of vaccines, and incorporating additional risk mitigation as required;

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.

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.