

**58<sup>th</sup> CONFERENCE OF  
DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION  
ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONS**

*Dhaka, Bangladesh  
15 to 19 October 2023*

AGENDA ITEM 1:       THEME TOPIC

**PROMOTING ICAO GENDER EQUALITY PROGRAMME IN  
CONJUNCTION WITH NEXT GENERATION OF AVIATION  
PROFESSIONALS (NGAP) INITIATIVE**

(Presented by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO))

**SUMMARY**

This working paper outlines the ongoing initiatives to improve gender equality and the promotion of gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women, in line with Assembly Resolution A41-26, *ICAO Gender Equality Programme promoting the participation of women in the global aviation sector* and in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG5 *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls* as well as activities to revitalize the ICAO Next Generation of Aviation Professionals (NGAP) Programme aiming to ensure availability of qualified and competent young aviation professionals to operate, manage and maintain the future international air transport system in line with Resolution A39-29: *Next Generation of Aviation Professionals*.

## PROMOTING ICAO GENDER EQUALITY PROGRAMME IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ICAO NGAP INITIATIVE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aviation, through providing connectivity between nations, reuniting families and friends, facilitating the creation of jobs as well as supporting trade and tourism, is a key driver of economic and social development. The Convention on International Civil Aviation articulated a vision for international civil aviation to be developed as a tool for world peace and prosperity. In the decades since aviation has started to connect the world's peoples, cultures, communities and businesses, its relevance and enormous transformational power to improve people's lives has become even more apparent. Today, millions of passengers take to the skies on over 100,000 daily flights within the aviation sector's global network, with numbers set to grow as the world continues to fully recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2 The Asia-Pacific (APAC) region is expected to experience a growth rate of 4.6 %, surpassing the global average of 2.8% <sup>1</sup>. With a population of over 4.7 billion, accounting for 60% of the world's population, the region holds a significant demographic advantage, and has a significant proportion of young individuals, giving it a demographic advantage and positioning it as a crucial supplier of human resources. Pre-pandemic, the aviation industry in the region was a success story with an impressive level of growth, supporting 30.2 million jobs and USD 684 billion in GDP in Asia and Pacific<sup>2</sup>

1.3 Pre-pandemic data contained in ICAO Doc 9956 <sup>3</sup>, *the Global and Regional 20-year Forecasts* predicted that by 2037, the APAC region will need to add 19,870 new aircrafts to the current commercial fleet of 31,000 and that 281,650 new technicians will be needed to maintain aircraft and over 238,420 pilots will be required to fly them with an additional 50,732 air traffic controllers required. While the COVID-19 pandemic might have impacted these projections, the full and sustainable recovery of international civil aviation in the region requires finding ways to attract, train, and retain employees, including young professionals to ensure that the sector as a whole will have the workforce needed for the future presents major challenges.

1.4 In addition, the sector's need for attracting and retaining qualified talent to support its future operations, gender equality and participation of women in the industry, particularly in technical and management positions, continues to remain a significant challenge at all levels. In May 2022 ICAO issued State Letter EC 7/27 – 22/25 in relation to a Survey on civil aviation licensed personnel and training capacity, including collection of data on licensed aviation personnel by gender. The results of this global survey on the status of licensed aviation personnel by gender reveals that the participation of women holding positions as pilots, air traffic controllers, and maintenance technicians has increased on an overall basis from 4.5% globally in 2016, to 4.9% in 2021, of which the Asia and Pacific region witnessed some of the highest increases compared with other regions. According to the data collected, APAC has 19.59% female air traffic controllers, 2.69% female pilots and 4.44% female aircraft maintenance engineers/technicians. Notwithstanding, these figures are a testament of the urgency of action to address the dire gender gap in the sector. The importance of achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls has never been clearer nor more urgent.

---

1 IMF global and regional outlook - May 2023

2 <https://www.icao.int/sustainability/Documents/AVIATION-BENEFITS-2019-web.pdf>

3 ICAO has developed a new set of long-term traffic forecast that was approved by the Aviation Data and Analysis Panel (ADAP) panel in September 2023. Building upon these forecasts, ICAO is presently working with States and Stakeholders to devise an updated methodology for establishing long-term personnel forecasts. The revised post-pandemic personnel forecasts will be completed and published during this triennium.

1.5 As such, significant challenges and opportunities in relation to key areas such as gender equality as well as the future workforce of the sector need to be addressed as a matter of priority and through multifaceted approaches.

## **2. DISCUSSION**

### *Challenges and opportunities*

2.1 The smooth functioning of the global aviation system relies heavily on a highly trained and skilled workforce. This workforce plays a crucial role in meeting the diverse demands of the industry and maintaining the highest standards worldwide, in line with ICAO's Strategic Objectives and ICAO global plans.

2.2 Pre-COVID-19 pandemic, the aviation industry faced a significant challenge due to a shortage of skilled professionals. The impacts of the pandemic on the international aviation sector further exacerbated the existing workforce issues in the sector, with massive layoffs resulting in a loss of experienced personnel and a migration of skilled workers to other industries. As international air travel gradually returned to normal, recruiting new professionals has become a major challenge, threatening the efficient functioning of the industry.

2.3 Furthermore, the rapid pace of technological innovation, the introduction of new technologies, and increased automation present additional challenges as well as opportunities for the aviation industry. In the field of human resources, these advancements require specialized skills and training, necessitating the adaptation and upskilling of the existing workforce.

2.4 Gender equality is key for achieving prosperity and sustainable development. It is essentially a basic human right and its achievement benefits all. Gender equality with equal opportunities for women and men in our sector will contribute to addressing the current and future workforce issue. Attracting young female and male professionals to choose aviation as a career path and enter the aviation workforce, mainstreaming gender equality in programmes and throughout institutions and empowering women working in the international aviation sector, are an intrinsic essential components of such a global and cross-sector response. However, this will require to tackle a number of challenges that contribute to the persistent gender gaps and workforce shortage in the aviation industry. These range from cultural stereotypes and gendered biases as part of early childhood development; insufficient promotion of education for adolescents, male and female, in and out of schools to make their entry into the aviation sector accessible, including Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education. Other bottlenecks relate to the lack of enabling policies and work environment, insufficient investment to advance gender equality and attract the next generation of aviation professionals (NGAP) in our sector and last but not least, lack of comprehensive data to enable informed decision-making and policy development in regard to NGAP and gender.

2.5 Some additional threats in the aviation industry include an aging workforce and the need for enhanced succession planning, perceived barriers to entry such as high costs and limited accessibility, lack of visibility and awareness about career opportunities, competition with other industries for highly skilled professionals, negative perceptions regarding work-life balance, the cyclic nature of the sector affecting its attractiveness, regional disparities in the workforce, and the absence of standardized qualifications and competencies that allow for global mobility in certain aviation disciplines.

2.6 To address these challenges, it is crucial for Member States and stakeholders to mainstream gender equality and NGAP throughout their institutions and programmes and invest in comprehensive human resources strategies and policies that prioritize the attraction, education, and retention of talent, with a specific emphasis on gender equality, inclusion and diversity.

*ICAO and its leadership in driving change*

2.7 Cognizant that gender equality is a prerequisite to realizing sustainable development for all, ICAO has been fully committed to supporting the implementation of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, including its Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, which underpins all other SDGs, and aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. In this relation, the 41<sup>st</sup> session of the ICAO Assembly unanimously requested ICAO to continue to demonstrate leadership in support of gender equality in aviation. Assembly Resolution A41-26 *ICAO Gender Equality Programme promoting the participation of women in the global aviation sector* aims to encourage stronger commitment from Member States to advance gender equality and women empowerment objectives through a number of additional actions for the Secretariat which include, among others, production of multi-annual and detailed statistics on gender equality outlining progress made at various levels, inclusion of gender equality as a core element of its human resource strategy and policies, and strengthening partnerships for gender equality between ICAO and relevant stakeholders that includes programmes and projects aimed at increasing the pool of women in the aviation sector and encouraging women to further develop their aviation careers.

2.8 In line with Resolution A41-26 and to advance the mainstreaming of gender equality imperatives throughout the organization, as mandated by the United Nations, the revamped ICAO Gender Equality Implementation Plan covers a broad spectrum of activities responding to 17 well defined indicators. These operationalize the Gender Equality Programme, which was established in 2017 with the primary aim of facilitating and coordinating targeted programmes and projects to enable progress toward the aspirational goal of gender equality by 2030, especially in Professional and higher levels of employment, within ICAO. The Programme also seeks to influence the attainment of greater gender representation within States and the global aviation sector. Some of the ongoing activities of the Gender Equality Implementation Plan, which spans across 2023-2025, include institutional transformation, strengthening of accountability measures to support compliance with ICAO's accountabilities, review of the opportunities for improving the working environment driven by the People Strategy, introduction of new financial tracking of gender activities in ICAO, and other enhancements related to gender mainstreaming.

2.9 Furthermore, in 2018, ICAO and the South African Civil Aviation Authority organized the inaugural Global Aviation Gender Summit with the objective to discuss the challenges faced by women in aviation, and the barriers to attracting, retaining and promoting women within the aviation workforce.

2.10 Building on the outcomes of the first Global Aviation Gender Summit in 2018, and in line with ICAO Assembly Resolution A41-26 on gender equality, the ICAO Global Aviation Gender Summit 2023 was hosted by the Government of Spain, through its Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda, from 5 to 7 July 2023 in Madrid. The Summit was organized in partnership with European Commission (EC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), UN Women, and the International Transport Forum (ITF) at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It brought together Governments, international and intergovernmental organizations, private stakeholders, academia and influencers of change from around the world to discuss solutions, catalyze progress, advocate for change and promote bold actions for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in aviation. Through the Summit, all stakeholders were called to work together to dismantle the barriers that women and girls face and to change the makeup of the aviation workforce, which led the Summit participants to agree on a comprehensive and action-oriented *Call to Action* for change. In this respect, the United Kingdom provided financial support over the course of 2 years to facilitate the development and implementation of a Global Ambassadors Programme for gender equality, diversity and inclusion.

2.11 Similarly, the ICAO Next Generation of Aviation Professionals (NGAP) initiative was established in 2009 to ensure a sufficient supply of qualified and competent aviation professionals for the future international air transport systems.

2.12 In 2016, the 39<sup>th</sup> ICAO Assembly adopted the resolution A39-29 on NGAP, urging all stakeholders in the aviation industry to actively pursue the vision and specific objectives outlined in the Resolution. These objectives include addressing the long-term human resources needs of the aviation

sector, implementing strategies to attract, educate, and retain aviation professionals, promoting best practices that cater to the needs and values of the next generation of aviation professionals and as such contribute to achieving gender equality and empowering women, encouraging collaboration between Civil Aviation Authorities, government education and labor bodies, academia, and the aviation industry to enhance the access to and the relevance of education and training programs.

2.13 ICAO has actively collaborated with various stakeholders to raise awareness about the pressing need for action in response to the current and projected personnel shortages.

2.14 The most recent ICAO NGAP Global Summit (NGAP/2) took place in China in 2018 and brought together the aviation community, education sector, students and labor sector to discuss strategies and initiatives for engaging, educating, and retaining the next generation of aviation professionals. The summit not only fostered the establishment of partnerships between ICAO and key industry and academic players in attendance but also hosted diverse side events. Notably, the Model ICAO Forum was organized to inspire and engage students in discussions on pressing aviation issues and encourages them to propose solutions to a panel of experts.

2.15 To effectively address the changing dynamics of the aviation industry and better support Member States, the ICAO Secretariat is currently undertaking a thorough revision of the Next Generation Aviation Professionals (NGAP) programme and developing a comprehensive global strategy on NGAP. This strategy will promote a systematic approach to promote not only STEM education, but also a broader range of aviation disciplines necessary to meet industry demands, engage with and train current and future aviation professionals to facilitate their entry and retention into the workforce and provide a roadmap for the development of specific joint actions supporting the above. Accordingly, the strategy will place a strong emphasis on capacity building, innovation, gender equality, diversity, equal opportunities and inclusion. It will also outline the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, fostering a collaborative ecosystem within the aviation industry. Through this collective effort, stakeholders will work towards a shared vision, common objectives, and priorities, combining their efforts and resources and fulfilling their respective roles and responsibilities.

2.16 An essential element of this strategy involves conducting comprehensive forecasts of personnel requirements in all aviation specializations, with a specific focus on gender disaggregation. This data will serve as a basis for developing targeted strategies, policies, interventions, and actions at the global, regional, and national levels.

2.17 Additionally, regional events will be organized to support states and stakeholders in advancing the objectives of the NGAP programme. These events will serve as platforms for collaboration and knowledge sharing, facilitating the implementation of NGAP initiatives on a regional scale. In addition, it is envisaged to organize the third NGAP summit during the current triennium, subject to availability of resources and interest.

2.18 ICAO as well, intends to strengthen its advocacy and awareness creation through establishment of a Global Ambassadors Programme for the promotion of gender equality, diversity and inclusion, which will include advocacy around the next generation of aviation professionals, as well as other outreach campaigns and assistance to States through facilitating the exchange of information and best practices.

2.19 At the regional level, the ICAO APAC Office is determined to put gender equality and women empowerment at the forefront, through supporting both the ICAO Gender Equality and NGAP Programmes as well as mobilizing activities in support of gender equality and NGAP in the region.

2.20 In these endeavors, alignment and concerted efforts are essential to adapt to the evolving industry landscape and enhance diversity and inclusion, while ensuring a sufficient supply of qualified and competent aviation professionals who can effectively operate, manage, and maintain the future international air transport system. It remains essential to prioritize the attraction, education, and retention of a diverse pool of talent, including girls and women, in significant aviation roles. This

collaboration will help ensure the long-term sustainability and success of the aviation sector, while also promoting inclusivity and diversity in the industry.

### **3. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE**

3.1 The Conference is invited to:

- a) Recognize the importance of, and clearly articulate and implement a vision for gender equality and NGAP in their aviation industry at the national level;
- b) Develop policies, as well as corresponding strategies and action plans, for gender equality as well as NGAP with the objective to identify ways in which they could foster a diverse and inclusive aviation workforce and advance gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- c) Take note of the actions envisioned in the Call to Action of the Global Aviation Gender Summit and facilitate the implementation of relevant actions at the national level;
- d) Engage with Ministries of Education and Employment at the national level to identify future skill gaps in the aviation sector and integrate them into broader national education policies;
- e) Encourage collaboration among APAC states, academia, and training institutions to enhance the quality and relevance of aviation education and training programs. By working together, stakeholders can ensure that these programs effectively meet the industry evolving needs and equip professionals with the necessary skills.
- f) Invest in a comprehensive data collection and analysis on human resources requirements in the global aviation system, including all aviation specialization, disaggregated by gender, age, skill levels to identify gaps and establish benchmarks;
- g) Support ICAO in its endeavours for creation of the Global Ambassador programmes to promote gender equality, diversity and inclusion in aviation;
- h) Support the APAC region in exploring the feasibility of establishing a task force with the objective to develop a regional plan for advancing gender equality and NGAP objectives in the sector, in line with the resolutions A41-26 and A39-29 .

— END —