

AVIATION INDUSTRY CALLS FOR UNIFIED ACTION



The ICAO Assembly in session at the ICAO Headquarters in Montreal.

The 38th International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Assembly, which concluded on 4 October 2013, saw global aviation leaders deliberate and tackle a wide-range of aviation issues. They covered areas concerning aviation safety, air navigation services, air services liberalisation, consumer protection, air transport's impact on the environment as well as matters related to the organisation and management of ICAO, the United Nations specialised agency for aviation. The assembly, held at the ICAO Headquarters in Montreal, made considerable progress on a number of critical aviation issues. In this issue of Bridging Skies, we highlight some pertinent aviation issues that were endorsed at the assembly.



Minister for Transport , Lui Tuck Yew at the 38th Session of the ICAO Assembly with members of the Singapore delegation.

Transforming Air Traffic Management

Air Traffic Management (ATM) modernisation is an enormously complex task. To safely accommodate escalating air traffic, the need to modernise ATM systems has become a priority. The 4th edition of the Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP), which was endorsed by the Assembly, is designed to provide a long-term vision that will assist States and the industry to ensure continuity and harmonisation among their air navigation modernisation progress plans from 2013 to 2028. It incorporates the Aviation System Block Upgrades (ASBU), which will allow ICAO to facilitate and realise the goal of a globally harmonised air navigation system. While the GANP was widely supported by States, implementation challenges such as limited available resources, as well as the need for training and capacity building, were noted. Greater collaboration is also necessary across States and regions to facilitate harmonised implementation. On these issues, Singapore emphasised the need to identify and prioritise the key ASBU modules to be implemented to deliver the required performance enhancements as well as the critical roles that should be played by the Regional Offices and Planning and Implementation Regional Groups in supporting States in this exercise. It further highlighted the need to ensure that the relevant standards and guidance materials are made available as early as possible to avoid stifling the progress of ASBU implementation. It also emphasised its support for the development of standards based on required performance instead of technology.

Additionally, Singapore called for a framework to co-ordinate modernisation efforts across regions and to promote innovation and collaboration as the key means to advancing ATM modernisation through sharing of expertise and resources.

A Global Solution to Reduce Aviation Emissions

The environment issue is a global challenge that requires collective and global solutions. The climate change agenda was dominated by discussions over the market-based measures (MBM), resulting in votes taken on the draft resolution. This is the first time in the history of ICAO that votes had to be taken to decide on parts of a resolution. This is unfortunate as ICAO had in the past, managed to pass resolutions by consensus.

Nonetheless, there was agreement by consensus for a global roadmap for ICAO and its Member States to address the sustainability of aviation emissions. This global package includes the setting of a new CO₂ standard for aircraft, research into sustainable alternative fuels for aviation, maintenance and updating guidance on ATM improvements and other operational measures to reduce international aviation emissions, voluntary submission and updating of State Action Plans, provision of assistance to developing countries, and the development of a global MBM for international aviation with 2020 as the reference year, subject to further economic impact studies.

Over the next three years, ICAO will discuss with States on the design elements of the scheme, including standards for monitoring, reporting and verification of emissions, as well as the type of scheme to be implemented.

Meanwhile, to address the interim issue of States implementing national or regional MBM schemes before the global MBM scheme is in place, the agreement was the need for States to first reach mutual agreement on such schemes. Singapore, with the support of other States, cautioned at the Assembly on the need to provide a level playing field with such measures which should be applied equally, fairly and indiscriminately in order not lead to significant market distortion.

Safety Remains Paramount

Apart from the hotly debated issue on the impact of air transport on the environment, the assembly also reiterated global aviation's first and guiding commitment to reducing the rate and number of aviation accidents worldwide through a structured approach. It confirmed that the strategic direction for this will be guided by the incremental targets established in a revised ICAO Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP), which received strong endorsement by the States including Singapore. The GASP will assist countries and regions in their aviation safety policy, planning and implementation activities by providing a timetable of target dates for the implementation of broad objectives set out over the next 15 years.

In advancing aviation safety, several States concurred that the sharing and analysis of safety data will be important. Further improvements in aviation safety will depend more heavily on data analytics involving the use of operational data such as air traffic control and flight data. If the data from various sources such as regulators, airlines, air navigation service providers and aviation organisations can be integrated and analysed at a broader level, this could potentially

uncover safety vulnerabilities or hazards that would otherwise not be detected. In presenting its recommendations, Singapore's call for the Regional Aviation Safety Groups (RASGs) to play a key role in developing and implementing regional safety data sharing and analysis was well supported.

In the area of safety oversight, States were encouraged to set up appropriate processes to fulfil their Continuous Monitoring Approach (CMA) obligations. These may include setting up a dedicated office to oversee the timely updates to ICAO and instituting regular internal audits.

Consumer Considerations

ICAO has done considerable work to monitor the development of consumer protection and develop guidance materials in areas such as fare, baggage and airport charges to name a few. They have also developed standards and recommended practices to facilitate the movement of passengers through airports with minimal delay and difficulty. Endorsing ICAO's work in these areas, the Assembly concluded that ICAO should also develop high-level non-binding and non-prescriptive core principles on consumer protection which strike a balance between protecting the consumer and ensuring industry competitiveness. To this end, Singapore suggested a set of core principles for consumer protection for ICAO's consideration. There is considerable work ahead as ICAO seeks to reconcile views of States with different approaches, some which are more prescriptive while others are market-driven.

The Way Forward

The conclusion of the 38th ICAO Assembly has yielded key noteworthy resolutions that will guide the Organization's continuing work and the development of the global aviation industry. ICAO will continue to leverage collaboration and partnership to ensure the effective progress of its body of work.

Singapore showed its support for this triennial event through its attendance, with Transport Minister Lui Tuck Yew leading a delegation of more than 30 officers, as well as its contribution of 10 working papers in various areas of aviation.