Summary Report
HLPF Side Event: High-Level Briefing on Aviation Contributions to Sustainable Development in Countries in Special Situations
19 July 2017, 08:15 - 09:30
Conference Room 11, UN HQ

The High-Level Briefing on Aviation Contributions to Sustainable Development in Countries in Special Situations was organized by International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), World Bank Group (WBG), and Air Transport Action Group (ATAG).

It was attended by over 40 participants from member states, the United Nations and other international organizations, civil society, and the private sector. Member state participation included representatives from Mali, New Zealand, Niger, Palau, the Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Singapore, Sudan, and Zambia. Private sector and NGO participation included that of Finnair, JetBlue Airways, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, Southeast Indigenous Peoples’ Center, SUST4IN, the Tasmanian Catholic Education Employees Association, the Royal Academy of Science International Trust (RASIT), and United Technologies. Representatives from UN World Tourism organization and UN Office of Legal Affairs were also present.

Key Recommendations
- Governments should prioritize aviation in their national development plans, as a key catalyst in sustainable development, and facilitate access to funding of sustainable aviation development projects.
- Public private partnerships in the aviation sector in the most vulnerable countries should be facilitated, wherever possible, given the nature of the industry and the high infrastructure costs.
- Global partnerships, both North-South and South-South, and with other stakeholders, should be enhanced and strengthened to complement national efforts of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS and regional collaborations, in order to achieve sustainable transport SDGs.
- Governments are encouraged to join ICAO’s global aviation climate scheme, the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA).

Summary of proceedings
The meeting was moderated by Ms. Irena Zubcevic, Chief, SIDS, Oceans and Climate Branch, Division for Sustainable Development, DESA, who highlighted the importance of sustainable transportation and its relations to SDGs 3 and 11. She noted that the first UN Conference on Sustainable Transport held in 2016 addressed all modes of transport, including air transport. Ms. Zubcevic noted the need to bring together key actors to talk about aviation and sustainable development.

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, UN-OHRLLS, provided the context of aviation in countries in special situations in the era of
sustainable development. The USG highlighted the important role of air transportation, as a mode of transportation for cargo as well as passenger transport, in harnessing the potential benefits of globalization towards sustainable development. In addition, the USG noted the importance of air transportation for tourism through employment and business creation, aid in response to natural disasters, creation of opportunities for diversification and value addition of exports, as a direct access to international markets for LLDCs without access to seas, improvement of connectivity for SIDS, and modernization of LDC economies. She stressed that there is currently low usage of air transportation by the LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, who are also facing high prices for air transport, limited domestic competition, and low investment. She stressed that capacity building, transferring of know-how and strong public private partnerships are necessary to develop aviation in these countries to overcome the high infrastructure costs. Overall, Ms. ‘Utoikamanu noted that the SDGs will only be successful with special attention to the most vulnerable countries.

H.E. Mr. Brian Mushimba, Minister of Transport and Communications of Zambia, shared Zambia’s experience as an LLDC, focusing on the challenges and areas of opportunity for sustainable aviation. The Minister spoke about building on the potentials of being landlinked, approaching the impairment of landlockedness as an opportunity, with Zambia’s vision to transform into a regional transport hub for all modes of transport. Despite the limited road and rail network and resources needed to connect transport systems, Zambia is keen to build on and improve its infrastructure. The Minister noted that air transport is the fastest, safest, most efficient, and economical mode of transport, a promoter of exports and tourism, and a key catalyst for development as a socioeconomic enabler. However, he also cautioned that challenges of air transportation include the climate change effects of carbon emissions; air, water, and soil pollution; the necessity of large investments for infrastructure development; and limited renewable energy solutions. He highlighted opportunities for aviation in Zambia, including the use of the Yammouskro Decision towards job creation; a draft carbon emission reduction plan and its linkage to the budget; private sector solutions; humanitarian and disaster response facilitation; capacity building through the Air Training Institution; natural and cultural heritage preservation; and integration of drone technology in other economic sectors. The Minister underscored Zambia’s progress in meeting ICAO standards and its removal from the EU Ban list and being the recipient of the ICAO President’s Certificate in 2016.

Mr. Michael Gill, Executive Director, ATAG, provided an overview of the aviation industry and underlined that sustainable aviation development is in all three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental. He noted that aviation supports 14 out of the 17 SDGs and is a vector for support for employment and economic activity both directly and indirectly, carrying over a third of global trade and supporting 62.7 million jobs. He noted that by 2034, aviation will support 99.1 million jobs and $5.9 trillion in GDP. For SIDS, he noted that aviation is a significant social motor for access to health care, education, and social, international, and cultural exchange. He highlighted that as aviation traffic growth moves East and South, contributions of aviation in developing countries will be even more significant. Mr. Gill also touched on the climate responsibility of the aviation industry due to the man-made CO2 emissions. He informed that ATAG hopes to reduce CO2 emission through three goals: 1) 1.5% annual average fuel efficiency improvement from 2009 to 2020, 2) stabilize net aviation CO2 emission at 2020 levels with carbon-neutral growth, and 3) reduce aviation’s net CO2 emissions to 50% of what they
were in 2004, by 2050. He explained that a four pillar strategy, consisting of technology, operations, infrastructure efficiency, and a market-based measure, is being implemented to achieve the three goals. Mr. Gill encouraged states to join ICAO’s global aviation climate scheme, the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA).

Mr. Henry Gourdji, Head, Strategic Planning, Coordination and Partnerships, ICAO, focused on the importance of prioritizing the aviation sector. Mr. Gourdji provided an overview of ICAO’s vision and its role in supporting 15 out of the 17 SDGs with five strategic objectives: safety, capacity and efficiency, security and facilitation, economic development, and environmental protection. ICAO also monitors SDG indicator 9.1.2., passenger and freight volumes by mode of transport, and ICAO’s goal is to make Member States aware of what they need to do to achieve SDG 9. Mr. Gourdji stated that air transport will double by 2030 and stressed the need for enhanced development aid to aviation as the sector receives only 4.2% of ODA to the transport sector. He called for states to prioritize aviation in their national development plans and to facilitate access to funding to sustainable aviation development projects. Overall, Mr. Gourdji highlighted the need for investment and capacity building in aviation, as it is a cross-cutting issue in achieving many SDGs.

Mr. Christopher J. De Serio, Transport Specialist, World Bank Group, provided an overview of the financing mechanisms to enhance sustainable air transport systems. As the World Bank’s twin goals are to end poverty and promote shared prosperity by 2030, Mr. De Serio noted that air transportation is a driver for development, as a safer, cleaner, and more efficient mode of transportation. He noted that the World Bank supports aviation through IBRD, IDA, and IFC with the CASCADE approach to finance, providing $1.24 billion in air transport investments in 2016, but representing only 2-3% of the transport portfolio. The CASCADE approach includes gradual utilization of: 1) commercial financing, 2) upstream reforms and market failures, 3) public and concessional resources for risk instruments and credit enhancements, and 4) public and concessional financing, including sub-sovereign. He highlighted that the World Bank is the lead financer in the Pacific Aviation Investment Project, a $220 million project in five countries, aimed at strengthening regulatory compliance. He explained that States are being asked to 1) adopt a Regional Safety and Security Levy, a tax on all international departing passengers which is used to finance safety and security activities by the regulators and operators, and 2) utilize the Pacific Aviation Infrastructure Maintenance Support Contract, which provides local maintenance practitioners with supplementary technical support and training and a mechanism for completing specialist and emergency repairs, all through a centralised contract and budget.

The interactive discussion touched on Zambia’s partnership with China and trafficking in the aviation industry. The participants learned that Zambia has been working with China on aviation infrastructure projects, particularly three airport constructions. In addition, it was mentioned that ATAG’s Global Sustainable Aviation Summit 2017 in October will be addressing illegal trafficking of persons and wildlife via air transport. The moderator summarized and closed the meeting.