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**ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION**

**PLENARY**

**Agenda Item #8: Statements by delegations of Member States**

**STATEMENT BY GEORGIA**

(Presented by Georgia)

President of the Assembly

President of the ICAO Council

Secretary-General of ICAO

Distinguished Delegates and Observers

Once again, we have become witnesses of the positive outcomes international cooperation brings to the world and the aviation industry specifically. It is due to the exceptionally hard work of ICAO and international collaboration that made the speedy resumption of air travel possible during the pandemic. With joint forces and shared aspirations, we have managed to minimize the negative economic effect of the pandemic on air transport services. Therefore, on behalf of the delegation of Georgia, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for ICAO's efforts to tackle the challenges facing the international aviation industry due to this rapidly spreading disease of COVID-19.

**INDUSTRY RECOVERY**

The gradual removal of restrictions on air travel in Georgia and abroad has given a much-needed boost to the industry. There is still a path to go to reach a pre-pandemic state of affairs, but the forecast for the evolution in passenger numbers gives good reason to be optimistic. In Georgia, as of August 2022, the statistics show a 40% growth in international air traffic compared to the last year. Overall, we are seeing a 95% recovery of international passenger traffic at international airports.

**IMPROVING AVIATION SAFETY AND SECURITY**

While the numbers remain promising, flight safety and aviation security should always be the priority. In 2019 during the 40th Assembly, the President of the ICAO Council awarded Georgia two certificates as a recognition of its progress in resolving aviation safety and security oversight deficiencies and its ongoing commitment to the effective implementation of ICAO SARPs. The effective implementation scores for Georgia under ICAO's Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) in 2018 reached 95% for

legislation, 92% for organization, 72% for licensing, 83% for operations, 83% for airworthiness, 96% for air navigation services, 93% for aerodromes and 91% for accident investigation. Similarly, in terms of Aviation Security, ICAO conducted USAP-CMA Audit in Georgia in December 2015 and as a result, the overall progress regarding compliance with ICAO's aviation security-related SARPs had shown significant improvement in EI score reaching 87,8%.

It is to be noted that this significant progress was achieved with the support of ICAO under its No Country Left Behind Initiative and other valuable partners such as the European Commission, EASA, ECAC and EUROCONTROL. Nowadays, Georgia, as a former beneficiary of the NCLB initiative, acts as a donor State and provides other States within the EUR/NAT Region with its technical expertise.

Furthermore, this year, Georgia has adopted its Aviation Safety Plan for the next triennial, which establishes the most essential elements of the required safety framework and is aligned with ICAO GASP, RASP, and the European Plan for Aviation Safety. Georgia aims at continuous enhancement of aviation safety, and close cooperation with partners and stakeholders at the national and international level is envisaged to achieve this goal.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

While the post-recovery aviation sector remains focused on the economic implications of the pandemic on air traffic, one must always be conscious of the side effects of the traffic growth on the environment. What the air service recovery brings is the outstanding number of air travellers and congested airspace, which means more carbon emissions into the atmosphere. The industry development must be shaped in a sustainable manner so that to ensure the environmental goals are achieved. To this end, ICAO's role in promoting the basket of measures to combat the environmental crisis is pivotal. Since the adoption of the Bratislava Declaration in 2016, Georgia has remained a strong supporter of the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA). Georgia voluntarily participates in CORSIA from the start of the pilot phase and is effectively engaged in its implementation at the national level. In addition, Georgia signed the Toulouse Declaration 2022 for Global Aviation's Net Zero Future and committed to COP26 Declaration setting up the International Aviation Climate Ambition Coalition.

Furthermore, Georgia welcomes ICAO's work towards the facilitation of SAF and LCAF development and deployment as they have the greatest potential to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from International Aviation. As one of the most effective basket measures, the accessibility to SAF for all States and air operators without discrimination should be guaranteed.

## **CONCERNS ABOUT THE BREACH OF THE CHICAGO CONVENTION**

Taking into account the tangible advantages of the conclusion of the Chicago Convention in 1944 and the creation of ICAO, which made the international air transport more safe, sound and prosperous, one must not forget about the fundamental principles of the international civil aviation that is to create and preserve friendship and understanding among the nations and people of the world. To cite the preamble of the Convention, the abuse of international civil aviation can become a threat to the general security.

Bearing in mind the ongoing military aggression in Ukraine and the shut of its airspace due to the Russian Federation's full scale invasion of Ukraine's sovereign territories, Georgia expresses its concerns in strongest possible terms regarding the breach of fundamental provisions of the Chicago Convention by the Russian Federation, namely art.1 (exclusive sovereignty), 18 and 19 (aircraft registration), as well as 29 and 31 (certificate of airworthiness). Such infringements of the key principles of the international civil aviation order is exceptional and unprecedented. Georgia unequivocally supports Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Unfortunately, Georgia still faces similar challenges having two illegally occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region (so called South Ossetia). In order to ensure safety of international air navigation, the airspace over the occupied territories are subject to the Special Legal Regime according to the Law of Georgia on Occupied Territories, which prohibits any unauthorized international air traffic in these two regions of Georgia. The same refers to the so called Sokhumi Airport located in the occupied region of Abkhazia, Georgia. Any flight operations from and to the Sokhumi Airport shall be solely subject of authorization and approval from the Government of Georgia. Unfortunately, in the context, when the Government of Georgia is deprived of the possibility to exercise its legitimate jurisdiction over its sovereign region due to the Russian Federation's illegal occupation, safety and security of flights cannot be guaranteed in the occupied region of Abkhazia, Georgia.

Therefore, any unauthorised flight operation performed in those occupied territories constitutes a breach of the fundamental norms and principles of international law, the Chicago Convention provisions, its Annexes, and at the same time ignores flight safety and aviation security requirements.

Georgia remains hopeful that ICAO undertakes effective measures to hold accountable Member States which violate the Chicago Convention and its Annexes. Adherence to principles, provisions and standards of the Chicago Convention and its Annexes by all Member States are of the utmost importance to ensure safety, security and efficiency in aviation.

#### **CANADA'S SAFER SKIES INITIATIVE**

At this very hectic time, when the industry strives to survive while it needs to overcome the restrictions imposed by health authorities and take safety precautions necessary to avoid several armed conflict zones, Canada's decision to launch Safer Skies Initiative was timely and much needed. In this regard, Georgia fully supports this initiative and recognizes Canada's efforts to enhance the level of safety and security for commercial airlines travelling in or near conflict zones.

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