

Ministerial Statement

Hon. Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Commonwealth of Dominica ICAO Facilitation Conference – Qatar Agenda Item 4: Passenger Experience

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I am honoured to address this Conference on behalf of the Commonwealth of Dominica as we collectively work toward enhancing the passenger experience across global air transport systems.

Dominica is a small island developing state with an ambitious vision: to become the first climate resilient nation and a world-class, sustainable tourism destination. To do so, as a small island, we must provide seamless, secure, and efficient air and sea travel experiences while preserving the values of hospitality, health, and resilience that define our people and our tourism product. As we prepare for the opening of our first international airport, the issues under this agenda item could not be more timely or relevant.

Dominica is currently undergoing a transformative chapter in our aviation sector with the construction of our first international airport.

This project marks a generational investment, not just in infrastructure, but in the **passenger experience of the future**. As we build from the ground up, we are embedding ICAO's facilitation principles into our design and operations—prioritizing **seamless movement, health security, and digital readiness**.

Under **Agenda Item 4.1**, we stress that expanding airport capacity must go hand in hand with **resilience and sustainability**. Our new terminal is being designed to support increasing traffic while also meeting climate adaptation standards—ensuring that as we grow, we do so responsibly.

On expanding airport capacities, we underscore the importance of scalable infrastructure planning. For Dominica, this means integrating technology and sustainable design from the outset, to anticipate growth without compromising on service standards or environmental integrity.

On **Item 4.2**, we recognize that the facilitation of clearance and service operations depends heavily on **inter-agency coordination**. In Dominica, we are implementing integrated border management systems and collaborating closely with CARICOM's Advanced Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) initiatives. This regional approach ensures that **customs, immigration, and public health protocols are harmonized** across member states.

Regarding the role of aircraft operators and airport authorities, we see a future where partnerships drive facilitation. Airlines and airports must collaborate not only with each other, but

with customs, immigration, and health authorities, to ensure clearance procedures are aligned and responsive—especially during crises, as we learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As it relates to the **passenger journey** under **Item 4.3**, we emphasize that travelers must feel welcome, safe, and informed at every touchpoint. In our tourism-focused economy, the **quality of that journey** is not an add-on—it is a core product. To enhance this, we are working with the Caribbean Tourism Organization and CASSOS to introduce **customer service standards and training** for aviation personnel across the region.

The overall journey experience must be reimagined from the perspective of the traveler. In the Caribbean context, this means reducing congestion, embracing digital solutions for documentation and declarations, and maintaining a warm and culturally reflective passenger environment throughout the process—from check-in to final arrival.

On **Item 4.4**, the challenge of unruly passengers is not lost on us. While such incidents are less frequent in smaller jurisdictions, we fully support the ICAO initiative to develop **standard operating procedures and legal frameworks** to manage these events both onboard and at airports. At a regional level, we are also exploring **shared protocols and training modules** through the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority (ECCAA) to ensure consistency and staff preparedness.

In closing, Dominica calls for this Conference to adopt bold, inclusive recommendations for:

- Modernized, integrated terminal procedures across customs, immigration, and health;
- Data-driven strategies to optimize passenger flows;
- Standardized facilitation practices among airlines and airport authorities; and
- A harmonized global approach to managing unruly behavior, including support mechanisms for frontline staff.

We remain committed to working with ICAO and fellow member states to deliver a world-class passenger experience that is safe, human-centered, and future-ready. Dominica remains committed to advancing these goals—regionally and globally—as we prepare to welcome the world through our new international airport. .

Distinguished Delegates, I am also pleased to speak on Agenda Item 12, a topic of great importance to small island developing states like Dominica, where **technical assistance, regional collaboration, and capacity-building** are not optional—they are essential.

Dominica is at a pivotal moment in its aviation development. With the construction of our first international airport underway, we are not only investing in infrastructure, but also in **the regulatory and human capacity required to ensure safe, efficient, and facilitative operations**. But we cannot do this alone.

On Item 12.1, the **provision of technical assistance** must be tailored to the realities of small states. ICAO's support, particularly through initiatives like the **No Country Left Behind**

program, has been valuable, but we call for even greater emphasis on **hands-on training, in-country expert missions, and mentorship programs** to ensure implementation follows policy.

Auditing and oversight, as referenced in **Item 12.2**, must not only ensure compliance, but also build competence. In this regard, Dominica has benefited from regional partnerships with **ECCAA and CASSOS**, which provide technical oversight and training. We strongly support the idea of **expanding regional aviation safety and facilitation oversight mechanisms** to avoid duplication, reduce costs, and build sustainable expertise in the Caribbean.

We believe this Conference should consider the following key inputs:

First, the **enhancement of regulatory and operational capacity** must include support for **new aviation states**. Dominica, for instance, is building capacity from the ground up, and we need assistance across the full spectrum—from airport certification to public health coordination and passenger facilitation.

Second, in implementing facilitation measures, technology must be made accessible. Digital tools for customs, immigration, and passenger handling are critical—but affordability, interoperability, and training must be addressed to ensure no state is left behind.

Third, we strongly advocate for **regional collaboration as a primary strategy**. In the Caribbean, we share airspace, security risks, passenger flows, and challenges. Shared services, pooled technical resources, and joint training initiatives—such as the **Caribbean Aviation Training Centre concept**—should be prioritized and supported by ICAO.

Finally, Dominica supports the development of a **monitoring and assessment mechanism for facilitation**, but one that is practical, transparent, and focused on continuous improvement rather than punitive compliance. States must be encouraged to self-assess, benchmark, and improve, with support—not just scrutiny.

In closing, Dominica reaffirms its commitment to working with ICAO and regional partners to strengthen our aviation sector. With the right support, small states can be global exemplars of safe, efficient, and people-centered air transport systems.

Thank you.