



ICAO



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Global Aviation Gender Summit 2023

5 TO 7 JULY, MADRID, SPAIN



[#GlobalAviationGenderSummit](#)

Concept Note

1. Background

Gender equality is a basic human right and as such it is enshrined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948). During the second-half of the twentieth century, clauses guaranteeing gender equality became a common feature of national constitutions.¹ However, despite all the efforts made throughout the years, gender inequalities are still deep-rooted in our societies and within various sectors and achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls continues to be a global and cross-sectoral challenge.

Gender equality is recognized as a prerequisite to realizing sustainable development and is integrated across the goals and targets of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, as it sits at the intersection of economic, social and environmental issues. The importance of achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls has never been clearer nor more urgent. As the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, has stated, gender equality remains “the unfinished business of our time”.

Data and its correct use and interpretation play a vital role in steering the world community to enhanced development across the globe. Data related to gender and gathered by the United Nations shows that women accounted for only 39 percent of all total employment in 2019, but represented 45 percent of global employment losses in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic emerged. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2022 of the World Economic Forum, it will take another 132 years to close the global gender gap if we do not act. At the current pace, it would take some 40 years for men and women to be represented equally in national political leadership roles.

Focusing specifically on the aviation sector, which is highly technical and specialized, there is still lots of work to do to close the gender gap.² The 2022 report of the Women in Aviation Advisory Board, for instance, indicates that in the United States women make up less than 20 percent of the workforce in most aviation occupations in the U.S. Of nine careers in the field, only one, flight attendants, had a preponderance of women. For each of the other eight careers, including airport managers, the percentage of women involved came in below 20 percent. Roughly 5% of airline pilots are women.³ Similarly, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), globally only 6% of airlines CEOs are women, broadly in line with 5% global average reported by Deloitte in 2022.⁴

Prior to the pandemic, our sector had a historical track record of doubling the number of passengers and flights every fifteen years. The uniquely rapid capability of aviation in connecting people and businesses translated into hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars, tremendously contributing to social and economic development worldwide.

In addition, aviation is recognized as a forward-looking industry, and known for the early adoption of new technologies and constantly stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship, also in view of achieving reduced CO² emission goals. Notwithstanding, gender equality in aviation remains elusive and women engagement

¹ Chilton, Adam and Versteeg, Mila, *The Effect of Constitutional Gender Equality Clauses* (October 27, 2021).

² Seligson, David, *Women and aviation: Quality jobs, attraction and retention*, International Labour Organization, 2019, available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/publication/wcms_740235.pdf.

³ Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Women in Aviation Advisory Board (WIAAB) Report, March 2022, available at: https://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/rulemaking/committees/documents/media/WIAAB_Recommendations_Report_Mar_ch_2022.pdf.

⁴ IATA Economics' Chart of the Week (4 March 2022), *Women are still under-represented in leading positions at airlines*, available at <https://www.iata.org/en/iata-repository/publications/economic-reports/women-are-still-under-represented-in-leading-positions-at-airlines/>

in technical areas and leadership positions is persistently low. Like in many other sectors, the COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on the vulnerabilities of women and girls and how they have been disproportionately impacted. Nevertheless, women have continued to break through the barriers and positively steer social, political, economic, and cultural change within their spheres of influence.

2. ICAO and Gender Equality in aviation

In 2016, the 39th Session of the ICAO Assembly adopted Resolution A39-30, *ICAO Gender Equality Programme promoting the participation of women in the global aviation sector*, in line with SDG 5 of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. In this Resolution, States, regional and international aviation organizations as well as the international aviation industry were urged to demonstrate strong, determined leadership and commitment to advance women's rights and to take the necessary measures to strengthen gender equality. Considering persistent challenges of achieving gender equality in aviation, the 41st Session of the ICAO Assembly adopted a revised resolution to encourage greater commitment to gender equality at all levels. The revised Resolution A41-26, which witnessed unequivocal support of the Assembly, includes a number of new actions for the Member States, the Council and the ICAO Secretariat.

In addition, the ICAO Council in its 222nd Session adopted the *Declaration on Improving Gender Representation in ICAO's Governing and Technical Bodies*, which is a concrete step in demonstrating the leadership of the ICAO Council in promoting the role of women in aviation especially in decision-making and leadership positions.

Furthermore, under the leadership of the Secretary General, ICAO has introduced a Transformational Objective in Business Plan 2023-2025 to reform the Organization and make ICAO fit-for-purpose. ICAO's reform around gender equality objectives, as part of the ICAO Gender Equality Programme, forms an important part of the Transformational Objective.

In line with Assembly Resolution A40-27 *Innovation in Aviation*, ICAO is cognizant of the importance of gender equality and innovation in aviation, as a more inclusive industry provides opportunities for bringing in new perspectives, ideas as well as creative and inclusive solutions that work for all. This will make the industry more competitive and resilient to future economic challenges.

Moreover, ICAO Assembly Resolution A39-29: *Next Generation of Aviation Professionals* recognizes that "in order to support growing aviation needs ensure the safe and efficient operation of the air transportation system, qualified and competent aviation professionals, as well as a diverse aviation workforce, are required." To support this objective, the Next Generation of Aviation Professionals (NGAP) programme was established to help ensure that enough qualified and competent aviation professionals, including female professionals, are available to operate, manage and maintain the future international air transport systems to support the projected growth in air transport, in line with ICAO's Strategic Objectives.

In addition, on 15 March 2022, ICAO entered into an Agreement with the International Labour Organization (ILO), that identifies as an area of common concern and interest "Women in Aviation". This paves the way for both United Nations agencies to "Deliver as One" to its respective constituencies on activities promoting gender equality in the aviation sector.

3. Global Aviation Gender Summit 2023: Delving into opportunities for women to be able to break the glass ceiling in aviation

In 2018, the International Civil Aviation Organization (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 attract, retain and promote women within the

aviation workforce. Participants of the Summit adopted a communique⁵ that, among other issues, highlighted the need for gender disaggregated data to drive gender-related policies and programmes in aviation, underscored the need to eliminate or mitigate the impacts of culture, stereotypes and biases on decisions related to gender, identified the need to make better use of measures such as internships, fellowships and mentoring programmes to develop women's skills in aviation.

Building on the outcomes of the first Global Aviation Gender Summit in 2018 in South Africa, and in line with ICAO Assembly Resolution A41-26 on gender equality, the Global Aviation Gender Summit 2023 is intended to be a global gathering for gender equality convened by ICAO and hosted by the Government of Spain and, on its behalf, by the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda, 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 aims to bring together governments, international and intergovernmental organizations, private stakeholders, academia, influencers of change from around the world to catalyze progress, advocate for change and promote bold actions for achieving gender equality and women empowerment in aviation.

4. Focus of the Summit: Enablers for gaining grounds on gender equality and women empowerment in aviation

Through the Summit, all stakeholders will be called to work together to dismantle the barriers that women and girls face in order to change the make-up of aviation workforce. While there are many 'right' questions as to why gender equality is not advancing in aviation at the scale and pace we would like to see, the Summit aims to take a '*see how it could work, not why it doesn't*' approach and will explore the enablers and solutions to achieving gender equality in aviation. Below are a number of game changing areas and entry points, on which the Summit will focus:

- **Global crises and emergencies, such as COVID-19 to catapult the industry towards change:** The COVID-19 pandemic led to an economic crisis, which considerably impacted women who were disproportionately represented in sectors hardest hit by COVID-19 – including the aviation industry. From household responsibilities, to increased workload, to job insecurity, women, compared to men, faced significant challenges during the pandemic. The situation has worsened during the current pandemic, exacerbating existing gender inequalities.⁶ While women make up almost two-fifths of the global labour force, they have suffered more than half of total job losses from the crisis. According to the report *COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects*, from McKinsey Global Institute, not addressing these gender disparities could cost the world economy 1 trillion dollars of GDP by 2030. However, taking steps to confront the issue now not only offers a pathway out of the crisis, but also could add \$13 trillion to global GDP by 2030.⁷

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the transport sector, and aviation in particular, was facing an existing labour shortage. As the world absorbs the impacts of the pandemic, economic concerns and rising inflation, it is more important than ever to focus on attracting, developing, advancing and retaining the workforce needed to effectively navigate the industry challenges and opportunities. This includes harnessing opportunities such as addressing gender-based occupational segregation and putting in place more gender-responsive policies, plans, budgets and work environments. This will be made possible through identifying good practices and

⁵ https://www.icao.int/Meetings/AviationGenderSummit/Documents/Communique_GlobalAviationGenderSummit_FINAL.10Aug.pdf

⁶ ILO, Shaping skills and lifelong learning for the future of work, International Labour Conference, 2021.

⁷ *COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects* available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects>.

incorporating women's voices and needs into post-pandemic planning and decision-making to ensure more gender-responsive policies. These policy responses should reduce the risks faced by the aviation women workforce by improving safety and security in air transport services and the workplace, while promoting attractive, favourable and enabling working environments. Investment on initiatives to promote gender equality in the post-pandemic era should be commensurate with the scale of the attraction and retention challenges the industry faces in these areas.

- **Decent work to ensure equal opportunities and empowerment:** As provided by the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, increasing employment and ensuring decent work for all are essential aspects of inclusive economic growth and sustainable development. Best practices and good examples taken from industry, governments and unions can shed light on how decent work can drive gender equality and inclusiveness in the sector. Ensuring equal opportunities and treatment for all includes aspects from a fair income, to facilitating more secure forms of employment and a safe and healthy working environment, as a fundamental principle and right at work.⁸ Decent work can increase the attractiveness and image of certain occupations by curbing turnover and the risk of women opting to leave the sector.
- **Making data work for gender equality in aviation:** Policy makers are challenged with the need to collect comprehensive gender-disaggregated data in the aviation workforce, which is key in making informed decisions and developing inclusive solutions to resource planning and sustainable growth of the aviation sector. Gender-disaggregated data ensures that policies, strategies and measures are evidence-based and correspond to the priorities, gaps and needs of the sector in achieving gender equality. Gender-disaggregated data is key in order to incorporate a gender perspective in civil aviation planning frameworks. It assists with identifying concrete and targeted action plans in addressing gender gaps, as well as in defining indicators and effective monitoring. In addition, such data is critical in order to implement a gender perspective in investments as well as budgeting and in the allocation, planning and managing of funds to implement gender equality and women's empowerment in their respective areas of responsibility.

While there is broad understanding within the industry regarding the importance of collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data as the cornerstone of transformational change towards a gender-equal industry, it is time for the aviation industry to place greater importance on the collection of comprehensive data and analysis on gender and commit to ensure such data is available and can be used to enable informed planning and policy-making.⁹

- **STEM education for everyone:** Women and girls in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) are creators, entrepreneurs, innovators and leaders. Not enough priority is placed on STEM in schools, therefore efforts to increase female interest and employment in STEM are not working as well as intended, which is especially true in technology and engineering. Globally, the percentage of women among STEM graduates is below 15 per cent in over two-thirds of countries.¹⁰ By 2030, some 880 million children will not be on track to develop the skills they need to succeed in the workforce.¹¹ This means that millions of children and young people are not developing the skills they need to successfully transition to adulthood. For girls and women, this

⁸ ILO, Resolution on the inclusion of a safe and healthy working environment in the ILO's framework of fundamental principles and rights at work (10 June 2022), available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_848632.pdf.

⁹ Note that the European Commission will issue recommendations for the transition to automation and digitalisation and their impact on the transport workforce end of 2023.

¹⁰ <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/2020genderreport>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

crisis includes difficulty accessing quality learning opportunities in STEM and lower levels of achievement in digital skills. While girls tend to outperform boys in reading skills in most regions, they continue to be under-represented amongst top-performers in STEM subjects, and women continue to be under-represented in the STEM workforce. This is a tremendous waste of talent and human potential.¹² Stronger commitment to educational outreach to younger generations is needed to ensure students are aware and have access to the tremendous opportunities that aviation holds for them.¹³

- **Capacity building for women through skills development, training and lifelong learning:** A good education is also about the lifelong learning, skilling, upskilling and reskilling for the rapidly changing world of work. A gender-sensitive approach to attracting and retaining women workers by creating, developing and strengthening women's capacities as aviation professionals can foster greater gender equality especially in technical and management positions. As the aviation industry changes rapidly with technological and scientific developments, the women workforce needs upskilling and re-skilling opportunities to stay abreast of the latest advancements and grow the pipeline of experienced and knowledgeable women professionals. One solution can be through tailored learning opportunities to close critical skill gaps.
- **Empowering better decisions through inclusive leadership and decision-making:** Gender equality goes beyond parity between women and men. Women and men must reflect the diversity of the society at all levels of the industry. Diverse and gender-equal leadership is therefore crucial for creating workplace cultures where all can thrive. Nevertheless, women remain underrepresented in aviation leadership and decision-making positions due to various structural, institutional and individual barriers. We should contemplate to gauge how flexible we are in terms of allowing women to rise to the highest levels, and acknowledge the different experiences, perspectives and skills that women bring to the table as decision-makers. A transformation will require not only a change in culture but also needs setting targets and goals to promote gender balance in leadership and decision-making roles across our organizations and plan accordingly for the steps needed to achieve those targets.
- **Innovation and technology:** Technology and innovation plays an ever-increasing role in the ways we learn, work and communicate. The achievement of the SDGs requires transformative shifts, integrated approaches, and new solutions. Innovation and technology have the potential to provide key opportunities to break trends and achieve gender equality and inclusive development. Lack of diversity will not only expand gender inequality, it will limit the innovation and scope of new technologies, making them less useful for everyone. From gender-responsive approaches to innovation especially in developing tools and methodologies, to promoting women as aviation professionals, aviation innovators and entrepreneurs, to greater awareness through organizing hackathons and inspirational programmes, to investing in innovations and technologies that meet the needs of women in aviation, there are tremendous opportunities for advancing gender equality in aviation through innovation and at the same time fostering more inclusive innovation ecosystems.
- **A course correction through gender-responsive policies and investments:** Gender equality is not going to happen on its own; we need enforceable policies and plans at all levels of the industry to promote the inclusiveness and empowerment of women and girls. Particularly in the wake of COVID-19, gender-focused policies are essential for narrowing persistent gender gaps, through

¹² *Towards an equal future: Reimagining girls' education through STEM*, UNICEF and ITU joint report.

¹³ See for instance the '[Educational Toolkits to help fight gender stereotypes](#)' that the European Commission has published to help learners, and girls in particular, to discover careers in transport.

planning, dedicated resources, monitoring, and tracking budget allocations towards gender equality, hence increasing transparency and accountability.

Civil aviation authorities and ministries of transport have the potential to model inclusive institutions, where women and men equally participate and lead, and to contribute to the sustainable growth of aviation in their countries. While women might be better-represented in public settings in the aviation sector in many countries, they remain significantly outnumbered by men in technical, leadership and decision-making positions. Furthermore, a lack of data and measures to assess gender equality in ministries responsible for air transport and civil aviation authorities contribute to the lack of a comprehensive picture and therefore progressing towards an evidence-based policy change.

There are a number of entry points to enable a reform of the overall workplace culture and work environment through policies. This includes promoting work-life balance and flexible working arrangements, putting in place inclusive and transparent human resources policies, including gender-responsive recruitment and selection procedures, such as recruitment targets, gender-balanced recruitment and promotions panels, gender training for recruitment managers and targeted outreach to women, gender-responsive performance evaluation processes and last but not least making the workplace a safe, respectful, and harassment-free space for all.

- **Role models to challenge existing stereotypes:** According to the Council of Europe, gender is an area that cuts across thinking about society, law, politics and culture, and it is frequently discussed in relation to other aspects of identity and social position, such as class, ethnicity, age and physical ability. Gender is believed to be a social construct—people define what it means to be a boy or a girl, and these social conditionings often expect children to conform to specific and limiting gender roles and expectations from a young age. Researchers suggest that children start absorbing stereotypes by age 3, causing the world to expand for boys and shrink for girls by age 10.¹⁴ This is evidence enough of the importance of role models in driving gender diversity, as those who are not exposed to the aviation industry at a young age, are less likely to consider aviation careers. The effect of the role models is based on the concept of ‘Seeing is believing’, which inspires younger generations and encourages women and girls to make different choices. Not only it is important to work specifically on making role models publically visible, but it is also key to consider gender balance in speakers, presenters, trainers, and technical panel members.¹⁵
- **Bolster equality through bold and concrete goal setting:** Goal setting can accelerate gender equality in our sector. According to a study by the World Economic Forum, one way to close the gender gap is by outlining diversity goals in quantifiable terms and setting specific measurable targets for achieving gender equality.¹⁶ This means setting ambitious but specific, measurable, achievable, resource-based, and time-bound (SMART) qualitative and quantitative goals. A clear and impactful example of such measure is the industry-wide initiative to improve gender balance in aviation by the International Air Transport Association (IATA). The 25by2025 campaign¹⁷ is a voluntary commitment by IATA member airlines to “advance gender diversity in the airline industry”. Such initiatives within the industry have strong a potential to be a major catalyst for progress and should complement public efforts made at the level of civil aviation authorities and ministries responsible for air transport.

¹⁴ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/5/compilation-gender-equality-starts-at-home>.

¹⁵ See also the work of the ‘Women in Transport – EU Platform for Change’.

¹⁶ https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Accelerating%20Gender%20Parity.pdf;
https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/SETTING-GENDER-TARGETS-Online-accessible_0.pdf

¹⁷ <https://www.iata.org/en/about/our-commitment/25-by-2025/>

- **Financing for gender equality in aviation:** Proper private and public financing is essential for addressing the gender gap in the aviation sector and overall advancing of gender equality and women's empowerment. Financing for gender in aviation is facilitated through various mechanisms including gender responsive budgeting, national investment and financing frameworks with gender targets, gender financing assessments and innovative financing instruments all of which leverage resources for gender equality. In addition, according to OECD analysis of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) from the members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 2019-2020, only USD 6.3 billion per year, or 5% of total bilateral aid, was dedicated to gender equality as the principal objective of the programme,¹⁸ the share of the aviation industry of which is obviously insignificant. Donors and development partners therefore need to maximise both the quality and quantity of financing for gender equality in aviation.

5. Summit Information

In light of the above, ICAO and the Government of Spain, through the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda of Spain, extend their warm invitation to all aviation stakeholders and partners with portfolios related to gender and diversity to join us in Madrid, Spain, from 5 to 7 July 2023 for three days of inspiration, knowledge sharing, and encouraging commitment and action.

For more information regarding the programme and logistical aspects of the Summit, please visit the [website of the Summit](#). For any other questions, kindly contact the organizing team at GenderEvent@icao.int.

6. Summit Participation

Directors General of Civil Aviation, senior officials and policymakers in civil aviation authorities, academia and industry stakeholders are warmly invited. It is envisaged that influential and inspiring female and male leaders championing gender equality will be invited on a case by case basis.

END

¹⁸ <https://www.oecd.org/development/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/development-finance-for-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment.htm>