

# Insights from the Director of the Air Transport Bureau (DATB), ICAO

## How does ICAO support States and Regions on environment, particularly in light of the Long Term Aspirational Goal (LTAG)?

We are witnessing a pivotal transformation in the aviation sector—driven by an extraordinary pace of innovation and an urgent imperative for environmental sustainability. To ensure ICAO's leadership in the area, as the ICAO Secretariat, it is incumbent upon us not to merely respond to this momentum, but to continuously guide and shape it. The scope and velocity of recent developments are evidenced by the landmark decisions of this triennium: the adoption of the Net-Zero 2050 goal at the 41st Assembly in 2022, followed by the endorsement of the ICAO Global Framework for Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF), Lower Carbon Aviation Fuels (LCAF) and other aviation cleaner energies, in 2023.

These milestones demand meaningful and inclusive action. As custodians of these commitments, we must ensure they are operationalized through comprehensive and equitable implementation strategies that reflect the diverse capacities and circumstances of all Member States. This entails fostering robust partnerships, mobilizing resources, and advancing technical assistance and capacitybuilding efforts, particularly for developing countries and small island developing States and other vulnerable regions that face unique challenges in achieving these goals.



Therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach will not suffice. It is essential that we tailor our strategies to meet the diverse needs of all Member States, considering their specific developmental stages, resources, and local contexts. The emphasis on inclusivity means prioritizing the needs of those who require the most support.

By focusing on innovation and collaboration, we can bridge these gaps and accelerate the transition toward a sustainable aviation future. This requires a forward-thinking approach, integrating cutting-edge technologies such as SAF, electric propulsion, and new operational efficiencies. Moreover, it is crucial to engage stakeholders from across the aviation ecosystem, including governments, industry players, and civil society, to align

efforts and ensure that the benefits of these advancements are shared equitably.

In this context, ICAO Secretariat plays a pivotal role in facilitating knowledge exchange, fostering partnerships, and coordinating global efforts to ensure that all Member States, regardless of size or development level, have the support they need to achieve their environmental commitments. Together, we can transform the aviation sector while remaining inclusive, equitable, and sustainable for the long term.

Moreover, as aviation continues to evolve—through the integration of cleaner energy sources, new technologies, and innovative operational practices—the Secretariat must play a proactive role in setting global standards, facilitating knowledge exchange, and aligning efforts across stakeholders. By doing so, we not only uphold the principles of the Chicago Convention but also reinforce ICAO's leadership in steering the sector toward a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future.

One of the Air Transport Bureau's key efforts has been on the enhancement of the ICAO State Action Plans (SAP) initiative<sup>1</sup>. Today, 150 States, representing over 99% of global Revenue Tonne Kilometers (RTK), have voluntarily submitted and updated their State Action Plans, including the expected results from the implementation of their selected measures to reduce aviation CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. States are encouraged to incorporate the latest innovations in aviation technologies and cleaner energies, outlining respective policies, actions and roadmaps in their SAPs, which will also be the essential means for ICAO to monitor progress in implementing all elements of the basket of measures toward achieving the LTAG.

In addition, ICAO continues to support States through seminars, workshops, tailored guidance, and tools that support the implementation of aviation decarbonization measures, including for the implementation of the LTAG and Global Framework.

### **Specifically, what role does ICAO play in accelerating the development and deployment of SAF, LCAF and other aviation cleaner energies?**

To accelerate the development and deployment of cleaner energies in aviation, several actions are already underway and must continue to advance. The ICAO Roadmap for the implementation of the LTAG and Global Framework with its four Building Blocks: policy and planning, regulatory framework, implementation support, and financing serves as a key driver to step up this acceleration. Among the Building Blocks, a high and immediate focus should be given to the need to accelerate the level of capacity-building and implementation support, financing, and other critical enabling and monitoring elements, to foster swift production and deployment of aviation cleaner energies in all regions.

In that regard, ICAO is making important progress on the Assistance, Capacity-building and Training for SAF (ACT-SAF) programme, and the operationalization of ICAO Finvest Hub.

Guidance materials are also supporting States on their journey toward cleaner energy use. A key element in this transition is the advancement of policies that enable the adoption and commercialization of aviation cleaner energies, and ICAO, through its Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP), developed the Guidance on Policy Measures for SAF Development and Deployment, outlining key policy options and approaches to support SAF deployment while also helping policymakers estimate costs and evaluate the effectiveness of various policy options.

### **Beyond aviation cleaner energy sources, what operational and collaborative strategies is ICAO prioritizing to drive environmental progress?**

Operational improvements remain a vital component of ICAO's environmental strategy. The Air Transport Bureau and Air Navigation Bureau of the ICAO Secretariat are cooperating closely to advance the initiatives that optimize air traffic management (ATM), improve efficiency in airport operations, and implement new technologies that reduce fuel burn and emissions.

1 [https://www.icao.int/environmental-protection/pages/climatechange\\_actionplan.aspx](https://www.icao.int/environmental-protection/pages/climatechange_actionplan.aspx)

A crucial strength of the ICAO CAEP's technical work in this area is its ability to bring together key stakeholders: Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs), airlines, airport operators, and industry leaders to discuss not only the implementation but also the methods for monitoring effectiveness, since a consistent and harmonized monitoring is vital for measuring progress. Harmonizing methodologies ensures that improvements can be tracked and integrated into ICAO's Global Air Navigation Plan, supporting the goal of decarbonizing aviation, through operational improvements.

Ensuring sustainable and resilient airport operations are also essential to aviation's cleaner energy transition. By adopting cleaner energy sources, circular economy practices, and climate adaptation strategies, airports can significantly reduce their environmental footprint, while supporting the deployment of SAF, LCAF and other aviation cleaner energies. The ICAO Green Airports Seminar, hosted in Athens, Greece in April 2024, also served as an important platform to share information and best practices.

### **Looking ahead, how will the Air Transport Bureau continue to support international aviation's cleaner energy transition?**

ICAO remains steadfast in fostering multilateral collaboration, ensuring that *No Country is Left Behind* in this transition. Continued engagement with regulators, industry leaders, and research institutions is enabling ICAO to shape policies that are both ambitious and achievable. In close collaboration with other Bureaus of the Secretariat, we will further strengthen the implementation support, enhancing financing mechanisms, and promoting the widespread adoption of innovative technologies which will define aviation's decarbonization pathway.

The challenges ahead are significant, but through strategic action and collective commitment, international aviation can achieve its long-term Strategic Goal. ICAO will continue to provide the leadership and coordination needed to ensure that aviation remains an engine of global connectivity while aligning with climate imperatives.

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