

Once-A-Decade ICAO Air Transport Conference Convenes

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Seeking to resolve critical economic policy matters supporting a more economically viable and sustainable air transport sector over the coming decades, officials from around the world are meeting at the Montréal Headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) this week for the UN agency's once-a-decade Worldwide Air Transport Conference.

Only the sixth such event which has been held since ICAO was formed in 1944, this week's Air Transport Conference will be seeking to resolve pivotal matters relating to improved competition and market access through increased 'open skies' approaches, lingering state restrictions on airline ownership and control, consumer protection and price transparency for global passengers and the ongoing proliferation of taxes and fees that are making it more expensive for people to travel by air.

"Aviation today generates 60 million jobs worldwide and more than 2 trillion dollars in economic activity, yet all of the world's airlines combined achieved only \$6.7 billion in net profit last year," highlighted ICAO Secretary General, Raymond Benjamin. "In other words, less profit than what some individual banks today earn in a single year. ICAO's States and the operator community must resolve their serious competition, taxation and market access challenges to ensure more dependable and fair profitability across our sector, not to mention better price transparency for passengers."

With the global air transport system forecast to double in size over the next two-to-three decades, requiring well over \$100 billion in infrastructure investment to get there, the stakes are high to develop more sustainable approaches to air transport pricing and financing at ICAO this week.

And because these events occur only once every decade, the solutions determined could have significant impacts on how and where people and goods will be transported by air for many years to come.

"Given aviation's historic role in supporting improved social development and economic prosperity, the potential benefits of growth are enormous over the coming decades," stressed ICAO Council President, Roberto Kobeh González. "There is a serious chance these benefits won't fully materialize, however, unless we come up with practical and concrete recommendations for adapting the global regulatory framework to the realities of the 21st century."

ICAO's Sixth Worldwide Air Transport Conference runs from 18–22 March 2013. Its recommendations will then be taken to the UN agency's triennial General Assembly in Montréal this September for adoption by all of ICAO's 191 Member States