

7. India Re-Elected to ICAO Council – International Relations

India has been re-elected to Part II of the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for the 2025–2028 term, with a stronger mandate than the previous election in 2022.

Overview

Establishment – ICAO is a specialized United Nations agency established in 1944 by the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation.

Headquarters – Montreal, Canada.

Membership – 193 member states, including India as a founding member.

Mandate

1. Develop and enforce international civil aviation standards.
2. Ensure safety, security, efficiency, and environmental sustainability.
3. Promote cooperation among member states for orderly and sustainable air transport.

Governance Structure

a. ICAO Assembly – Supreme decision-making body comprising representatives of all 193 member states. Convenes once every three years.

Functions

1. Approves policies and budgets.
2. Reviews work of the ICAO Council.
3. Decides on amendments to the Chicago Convention.

b. ICAO Council – Governing body of ICAO, elected by the Assembly for three-year terms. Composed of 36 member states divided into three categories –

1. **Part I** – States of chief importance in air transport.
2. **Part II** – States contributing most to air navigation facilities.
3. **Part III** – States ensuring geographical representation.

Functions

1. Formulates Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs).
2. Coordinates international aviation policies.
3. Oversees technical, economic, and regulatory matters.

c. Other Key Bodies

Air Navigation Commission (ANC) – Advises Council on technical issues and develops SARPs.

Committees of the Council – Focus on finance, transport, technical cooperation, and environmental issues.

Secretariat – Headed by the Secretary-General, responsible for implementing ICAO's programs.

India's Role in ICAO – India has been a founding member since 1944. Maintained an uninterrupted presence on the Council for 81 years. In 2025, India secured a stronger mandate compared to 2022, reflecting global confidence in its leadership.

Contributions include –

1. Policy development and regulatory frameworks.
2. Development of international aviation standards.
3. Strengthening aviation safety, security, and environmental measures.

India's Growing Aviation Sector

1. Current Status

Global Ranking – India is the third-largest domestic aviation market after the US and China.

Passenger Traffic – Domestic traffic exceeded 15.5 million passengers in April 2024.

Growth Drivers

1. Rising middle-class income.
2. Increasing urbanisation.

3. Growing tourism and business travel demand.

Economic Contribution – Aviation contributes approximately 5% to India's GDP, including tourism, trade, and employment. Generates direct employment in airlines, airports, MROs, and indirect jobs in logistics, hospitality, and allied sectors.

Government Initiatives

a. UDAN Scheme (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) – Promotes regional connectivity. Enhances affordable air travel and links underserved airports.

b. National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) 2016 – Provides a roadmap for –

1. Growth of civil aviation.
2. Safety and competitiveness.
3. Encouraging private sector participation.

c. FDI Liberalisation – 100% FDI permitted in domestic airlines under the automatic route. Foreign carriers allowed up to 49% ownership. Aims to attract investment, technology, and global best practices.

d. Airport Modernisation – Expansion and modernisation under PPP mode. Focus on greenfield airports, e.g. –

1. **Jewar (Noida)**
2. **Navi Mumbai Airport**

Goals – Increase capacity, efficiency, and sustainability.

Strategic Importance

International Engagement – India's strong ICAO role enhances its influence on global aviation standards.

Economic Potential – Aviation sector is critical for trade, tourism, and employment generation.

Sustainability Focus – Adoption of green aviation practices aligns with global environmental standards.

Global Connectivity – Regional connectivity schemes like UDAN support inclusive development and economic integration of remote areas.

Conclusion

ICAO serves as the global standard-setting body for civil aviation, and India's leadership role demonstrates global confidence in its aviation expertise. India's rapidly growing aviation sector, supported by policy reforms, infrastructure development, and international engagement, positions it as a key player in global civil aviation. The sector not only drives economic growth but also supports tourism, employment, and regional connectivity, reflecting the synergy between international engagement and domestic development.

Source – <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-re-elected-to-icao-council-with-highest-ever-mandate/articleshow/124237442.cms>