

## **Joint Statement on Higher Airspace Operations (HAO)**

New technology and engineering breakthroughs are driving a growing need for common rules to support the safe, secure, and sustainable development of civil aviation operations taking place in higher airspace, typically above the level of today's regulated conventional aircraft operations.

Activity in higher airspace is poised to soar, with demand for applications as diverse as bringing 5G and 6G telecommunications to underserved communities, improving current Earth Observation capabilities, and enabling innovation in transportation of people and goods.

Systems that ensure safety and security for the millions of flights occurring at lower altitudes are simply not in place for activity in higher airspace. Aircraft operating in higher airspace have vastly different performance characteristics and unconventional operational needs.

Now is the time for a holistic vision of higher airspace operations. That vision should include harmonized rules for airworthiness, staff training and licensing, ground operations, identification, detection, communication, location, flight paths, and emergencies to ensure that aircraft operating in higher airspace do not undermine the safety, security, and sustainability of the existing aviation system while expanding the international aviation ecosystem in exciting ways.

We call upon ICAO to prioritize and expedite higher airspace operations in its work program and to accelerate the development and implementation of solutions for manned and unmanned aviation traffic in higher airspace, recalling ICAO Assembly Resolution A41-9, which recognizes ICAO's role in supporting the development and implementation of global concepts and guidance in higher airspace.

We further urge the ICAO Secretariat to organize discussions on higher airspace operations\* during the next 14th Air Navigation Conference in order to reshape ICAO's technical work program to take onboard these new priorities and identify potential resources, consider progress and determine a way forward, taking into consideration the discussions on higher airspace operations at the recent Air Navigation World Event.

Finally, we call upon the Air Navigation Commission, the premier forum for studying, discussing, and advancing civil aviation standards, to support this vital work in ICAO.

*\*Space launch and re-entry operations are not higher airspace operations simply because they transit through higher airspace. Separation between launch and re-entry operations and aviation activities needs to be maintained throughout all airspace for the safety of the wider airspace network.*