

Improved economic conditions boost air-traveller numbers worldwide – UN agency

18 January 2018 – Improved economic conditions boost air-traveller numbers worldwide – UN agency A record 4.1 billion passengers took to the skies in 2017 onboard some 37 million scheduled flights globally, the United Nations civil aviation agency reported Thursday, highlighting that the fastest growth was seen among low-cost carriers.

According to preliminary figures released by the UN International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), air travel demand growth too gained “solid momentum” on the back of improved global economic conditions throughout the year.

“[The upward trend](#) was driven by the strengthening investment in advanced economies as well as the recovery in emerging market and developing economies owing to the increased export demand,” said the UN agency.

It added that lower air fares owing to the low fuel price also continued to stimulate traffic growth, albeit at a more moderate level compared to 2016.

In terms of geographic distribution, Europe remained as the largest international market (37 per cent of the global total), recording a strong 8.1 per cent growth over the previous year. Asia-Pacific came in second with 29 per cent and growth of 9.6 per cent over 2016.

North America accounted for a 13 per cent global share, and demonstrated but notched up the slowest growth as a region (4.9 per cent over 2016).

The Latin America and the Caribbean region bagged 4 per cent of the international traffic and saw the largest improvement among all regions at 10 per cent. Africa had the smallest traffic share three per cent, grew slightly faster than last year at 7.6.

Low-cost carriers and air cargo post strong numbers

The ICAO news release also reveals that low-cost carriers consistently grew at a faster pace compared to the world average growth, carrying an estimated 1.2 billion passengers and accounting for approximately 30 per cent of the world total scheduled passengers.

At the same time, bolstered by improving global economic conditions and world trade, air cargo demonstrated a strong rebound in 2017, recording a “robust” 9.5 per cent growth, a “significant improvement” from the 3.8 registered in 2016.

ICAO also reported that in 2017, average jet fuel prices increased by about 25 per cent compared to 2016 but remained significantly lower than the prices

observed for the ten years prior to 2016.

According to the UN agency, finalized figures will be released in July.

[Near-record warm temperatures fuel deadly, costly weather events in 2017 – UN](#)

18 January 2018 – The upward trend in global temperatures marked by record-shattering warmth in 2015 and 2016 kept pace last year, with the United Nations weather agency warning Thursday that the continued pressure on the Arctic in 2017 will have “profound and long-lasting repercussions on sea levels, and on weather patterns in other parts of the world.”

“The long-term temperature trend is [far more important](#) than the ranking of individual years, and that trend is an upward one,” Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said.

A WMO analysis showed that while measuring 1.2°C above the preindustrial era that 2016 holds the warmest year record, 2017, which measured approximately 1.1° C above the pre-industrial era, was the warmest year without an El Niño, which can boost global annual temperatures.

Describing the accelerating pace of climate change as “an existential threat to the planet,” the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, Robert Glasser, said, “A three-year streak of record hot years, each above 1° Celsius, combined with record-breaking economic losses from disasters in 2017 should tell us all that we are facing an existential threat to the planet which requires a drastic response.

“We are getting dangerously close to the limit of the 2°C temperature rise set out in the [Paris Agreement](#) and the desired goal of 1.5° will be even more difficult to maintain under present levels of greenhouse gas emissions,” he underscored.

Recording the same global average temperatures, 2017 and 2015 were virtually indistinguishable because the difference is less than one hundredth of a degree, which is less than the statistical margin of error.

“Seventeen of the 18 warmest years on record have all been during this century, and the degree of warming during the past three years has been exceptional,” Mr. Taalas pointed out, stressing: “Arctic warmth has been especially pronounced and this will have profound and long-lasting repercussions on sea levels, and on weather patterns in other parts of the world.”

The globally averaged temperature in 2017 was about 0.46°C above the 1981-2010 long-term average of 14.3°C – a 30-year baseline used by national meteorological and hydrological services to assess averages and variability of key climate parameters, which are important for climate-sensitive sectors, such as water management, energy, agriculture and health.

Climate also has a naturally occurring variability due to phenomena such as El Niño, which has a warming influence, and La Niña, which has a cooling influence.

“Temperatures tell only a small part of the story. The warmth in 2017 was accompanied by extreme weather in many countries around the world,” Mr. Taalas continued, saying that the United States had its most expensive year ever in terms of weather and climate disasters, “whilst other countries saw their development slowed or reversed by tropical cyclones, floods and drought.

In March, WMO will issue its 2017 full Statement on the State of the Climate, which will provide a comprehensive overview of temperature variability and trends, high-impact events, and long-term indicators of climate change such as increasing carbon dioxide concentrations, Arctic and Antarctic sea ice, sea level rise and ocean acidification.

The final statement will include information submitted by a wide range of UN agencies on human, socio-economic and environmental impacts as part of a drive to provide a more comprehensive, UN-wide policy brief for decision makers and the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

Mr. Glasser expressed concern that climate change, combined with poverty, eco-systems destruction and inappropriate land use are pushing more people to leave home.

“We need increased levels of ambition to reduce greenhouse gas emissions combined with concrete actions to reduce disaster risk especially in least developed countries which contribute little to climate change,” he underscored.

In Doha, General Assembly President spotlights UN ‘sustaining peace’ agenda

18 January 2018 – Conflict is not always linear, with a clear beginning, middle and end, the President of the United Nations General Assembly said Thursday, urging a new approach to peace that requires action at all stages of the conflict cycle.

“We are no longer dealing only with tanks, planes, and uniformed troops,” Miroslav Lajčák told a two-day regional forum on ‘Sustaining Peace’ held in Doha, Qatar, explaining that other factors, such as terrorism, growing internal violence, new technology and climate change, have transformed the faces of conflict and peace.

He stressed that action is needed when there are warning signs of conflict, when political tensions are on the rise, when human rights are being violated, when there is some hope of peace, amid conflict, when warring parties show any kind of willingness to talk, when a peace deal has been signed, when infrastructure needs to be rebuilt, and when a society is trying to patch itself back together.

“Sometimes we separate these into stages of prevention, mediation and peacebuilding. Other times we refer to them all as the peace continuum. But the magic of ‘Sustaining Peace’ is that all of them are brought together, under one umbrella, and one new approach,” he said.

This new approach, ‘Sustaining Peace,’ was adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council in April 2016, breaking new ground. One milestone along the way will be the expected publication next month of the UN Secretary-General’s report on the subject.

The Assembly President will also convene a High-Level Meeting on Sustaining Peace on 24 and 25 April, in New York.

A recent UN-World Bank report noted that conflict can kill a chance of progress from many areas – from development and poverty reduction, to health and education. The report also pointed out that, even with cautious estimates, more investment in conflict prevention could save the international community \$1.2 billion per year. And the benefits would be even more significant at the national level. Because, prevention could save countries over \$34 billion in losses.

At the moment, UN resources for peace are concentrated on military peacekeeping missions, and there is a chronic shortfall of funding to build or preserve peace, he said, noting that this affects activities for conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding.

He hopes that at the high-level meeting in April can provide a platform for this, leaders from all over the world will voice their commitment to making financing for Sustaining Peace stronger, and more predictable.

Mr. Lajčák also stressed the importance of partnerships. Within the UN system, silos between humanitarian and development work must be torn down, he said, highlighting the need for partnerships between the UN and other actors, including civil society, academia, regional and sub-regional organizations, regional development banks, and international financial institutions.

Finally, Mr. Lajčák underscored the need to do more to showcase best practices. “Sustaining Peace *is* happening. But it is the exception – not the norm,” he said.

Dialogue and confidence vital to prevent, resolve conflicts, says UN chief

18 January 2018 – Dialogue and confidence vital to prevent, resolve conflicts, says UN chief Worldwide concerns over nuclear weapons are the highest they have been since the Cold War, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Thursday, calling for comprehensive political solutions that include dialogue and negotiation to prevent, mitigate and resolve conflicts.

In cases involving weapons of mass destruction, “verifiable disarmament and non-proliferation” efforts are critical, [stressed](#) the UN chief, speaking alongside Nursultan Nazarbayev, the President of Kazakhstan, at a Security Council meeting on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

However, warning that confidence can be undermined by “bellicose rhetoric, confrontational approaches, the absence of communication channels, and inflexible positions,” Mr. Guterres underscored the importance effective verification mechanisms.

“From the ground-breaking verification protocols of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, to the invaluable work undertaken by the International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), verification builds confidence,” he said.

In his remarks, the Secretary-General also expressed his belief that UN can play a central role in assisting its Member States to develop, augment and support confidence-building measures and that its position as an “honest broker” allows it to serve as a venue in which all parties can engage in dialogue.

The UN’s position as an “honest broker” allows us to act as a venue in which all parties can engage in dialogueSecretary-General Guterres

“Going forward, the Security Council, in particular, can provide leadership by demonstrating unity and continuing to highlight the importance of dialogue and diplomacy as an essential means for building confidence,” he said, adding that a measure all Member States can undertake is the universal and complete implementation of all disarmament and non-proliferation obligations.

Mr. Guterres went on to welcome the reopening of inter-Korean communication channels, especially the military-to-military one, and said that it is critical to lower the risk of miscalculation or misunderstanding and to

reduce tensions.

“I am also encouraged by the decision of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to participate in the upcoming Winter Olympics in the Republic of Korea,” he said, calling for expansion of diplomatic efforts to achieve the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

At the same time, he added, that the firm decisions the Security Council taken in response to nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches by the DPRK in defiance of Council resolutions must be fully implemented.

Unity within the Security Council vital

The UN chief also highlighted the importance of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iranian nuclear programme and said that multilateral agreement, which is in the interest of the Iranian people and the international community at large, should be preserved.

Turning to the Syrian conflict where the use of chemical weapons has challenged the “global taboo” against these weapons of mass destruction, Mr. Guterres said that if the use of chemical weapons in the country is once again determined, the international community “needs to find an appropriate way to identify those responsible and hold them to account.”

“Without such an avenue, we are allowing the use of chemical weapons to take place with impunity,” he stressed urging for unity within the Security Council on the issue.

The Security Council meeting today on the theme of *non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: confidence-building measures* was convened by Kazakhstan in its capacity as the President of the Security Council for the month of January.

Central African Republic: UN mission issues 48-hour ultimatum to armed groups

17 January 2018 – The United Nations Mission in the troubled Central African Republic, known by its French acronym, MINUSCA, has given armed groups in the north of the country 48 hours to clear out.

The Mission wants to clear a 50 kilometre perimeter around the town allowing displaced persons to return.

Over the last three weeks, some 60,000 people – mostly women – left

everything behind to escape clashes between the armed groups Justice Riot (RJ) and the National Movement for the Liberation of the Central African Republic (MNLRC).

They ended up in Paoua, where some 40,000 residents took them in.

Now the food and water is running out.

We get the latest from CAR Humanitarian Coordinator Najat Rochdi:

AUDIO: Najat Rochdi, Humanitarian Coordinator in the Central African Republic, provides an update on the fighting in the north of the country.