



ICAO calls on states, aircraft operators and other stakeholders to enhance support for air crash victims and their families

Montréal, 20 February 2025 – On the occasion of today's *International Day Commemorating Air Crash Victims and their Families*, ICAO Council President Salvatore Sciacchitano has issued the following statement:

“Recent tragic events in our skies serve as stark reminders that, despite aviation's remarkable safety record, each accident represents not just a statistic, but profound human loss. Every life lost is a story unfinished, a family forever changed. This solemn reality reinforces our responsibility to ensure no family suffers in isolation.

For nearly five decades, since the introduction of provisions in Annex 13 in 1976, ICAO has progressively developed comprehensive frameworks for victim assistance. While we have established robust standards, policies, and detailed guidance for States, our recent audits reveal that only 5% of Member States have fully implemented comprehensive victim support systems. This gap between standards and implementation must be addressed with urgency.

The aftermath of an aviation accident extends far beyond the crash site. Families need not just immediate crisis response, but sustained support, clear communication, and access to information throughout investigation processes. Our elevation of family assistance provisions in Annex 9 – Facilitation, from Recommended Practice to Standard in 2022 reflects this understanding, making it mandatory for States to establish proper legislation and policies.

A crucial aspect of our progress has been the decision to develop a dedicated

implementation package (iPack) relating to Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims and Families (AAAVF). Through this initiative, ICAO will be advancing capacity-building projects and providing targeted assistance to States in developing their support mechanisms.

Today, I call upon all States to strengthen their commitment to comprehensive victim assistance frameworks. This includes ratification of the *Montreal Convention 1999* to ensure harmonized liability rules and compensation mechanisms worldwide. States must implement robust family assistance plans under Annexes 9 and 13, while ensuring strict adherence to investigation timelines and transparency requirements under Annex 13. The timely release of investigation reports and maintaining clear communication channels with families throughout the process are not optional courtesies – they are fundamental obligations.

We must also recognize that true progress lies in how we embed family assistance into the very fabric of aviation operations. Regulators, airlines and all relevant stakeholders must integrate family assistance protocols into their emergency planning and corporate culture. This includes regular training, awareness campaigns, and the promotion of empathetic communication in accident response.

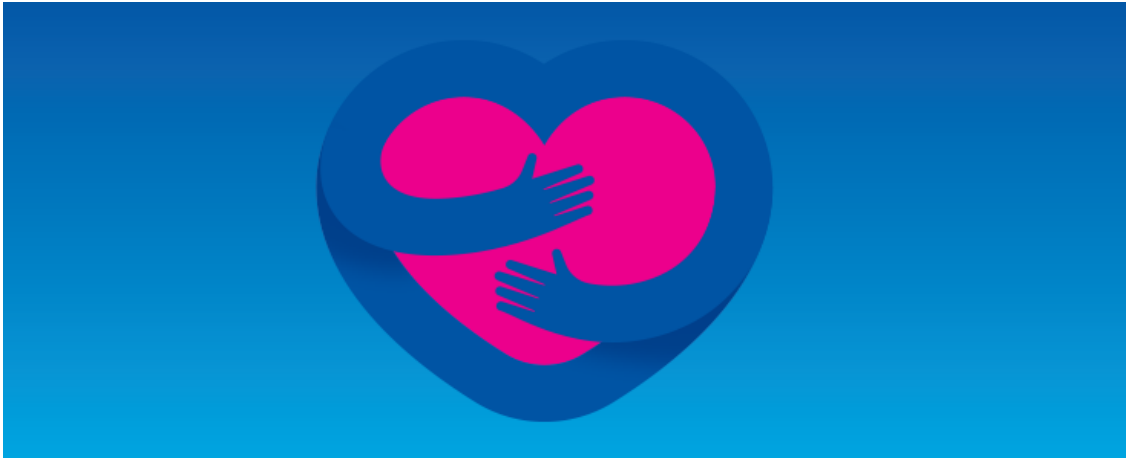
ICAO stands ready to support States in this crucial work. Our dedicated expert group continues to enhance practical measures for assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families.

The establishment of 20 February as the International Day Commemorating Air Crash Victims and Their Families by ICAO, with the support of the Air Crash Victims' Families' Federation International (ACVFFI), demonstrates the importance of memorial initiatives and public remembrance programmes. These serve not only to honor the memory of those lost but also to reinforce our collective commitment to preventing future tragedies. We encourage States to establish and maintain such programmes as permanent reminders of our responsibility to the aviation community.

Safety remains aviation's foundation, but our industry's true character is reflected in how we care for those affected by tragedy. Let us transform our remembrance into

action, ensuring consistent and fair compensation mechanisms globally, and strengthening our support systems at every level.

Together, we can ensure that every family affected by an aviation accident receives the support, respect, and care they deserve."



A specialized agency of the United Nations, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) leads the international alignment of technical standards and strategies, facilitating the safe, secure, and sustainable development of its 193 member states' aviation sectors and air services. This year, ICAO is celebrating the 80th anniversary of its establishment by the 1944 Convention on International Civil Aviation.

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