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# WFP aviation policy

## Executive summary

New wars and unresolved conflicts, the global climate crisis, pandemics and recurrent economic shocks have caused an increase in hunger and malnutrition and the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance. WFP's work in reaching people who have been affected by disasters, shocks and displacement is more important than ever.

Embedded in WFP's mandate to deliver food and other assistance to those most in need is the provision of safe and reliable aviation services to the humanitarian community. WFP has used aviation services to deliver humanitarian assistance for over four decades and has provided such services to the broader humanitarian community since 2004. WFP's systems, skills and response capability in emergency aviation services have grown, increasing the ability of the humanitarian system to get to people who are in fragile and remote settings.

In its 2019 report on air transport services, the WFP External Auditor recommended that, given the importance of aviation to the United Nations and the humanitarian community and the risks and funding modalities associated with it, an aviation operations policy be prepared for approval by the Executive Board. The purpose of such a policy document would be to define the scope of WFP's aviation mandate. This will also include the coordination of flight missions for the humanitarian community, for WFP itself or for third parties (short-term or dedicated air services), the criteria for including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as beneficiaries of such services, the relationship between WFP's Aviation Service and Aviation Safety Unit and, finally, the funding rules applicable to the activity.

The aviation policy is therefore grounded in humanitarian principles[1] and WFP's commitment to provide common services to all humanitarian actors. It sets out WFP's objectives regarding aviation. This includes the provision of common, specialized and on-demand aviation services to

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[1] "Humanitarian Principles" (WFP/EB.A/2004/5-C).

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the broader humanitarian community and critical partners such as United Nations entities, NGOs and the diplomatic community. The policy will also act as a facilitator between aviation and humanitarian stakeholders in the context of emergency preparedness and response and strengthen aviation systems and capacity at the regional and national levels. The policy also describes the role of essential enablers – partnerships, sustainable funding and a high-performing and agile workforce – in achieving its objectives, outlining the next steps for its implementation and monitoring.

## Draft decision*

The Executive Board approves the WFP aviation policy (WFP/EB.1/2023/4-A).

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* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the decisions and recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

## Introduction and context

1.  The world is facing unprecedented challenges and not on track to achieve zero hunger and the 16 other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Driven by conflict, the climate crisis and the socioeconomic consequences of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, humanitarian needs have reached unprecedented levels. During emergencies in hard-to-reach areas, air transport is sometimes the only lifeline available for delivering humanitarian assistance and moving humanitarian actors into place. WFP's global footprint leadership in emergency response and strong partnerships help to ensure the delivery of humanitarian supplies such as food, medical items and shelter.

2.  WFP's strategic plan for 2022–2025 and the Secretary-General's drive for United Nations development system reform have committed WFP to enhancing and broadening its capacity to help humanitarian and development actors become more efficient and effective. WFP will continue to manage the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), widely acknowledged as a critical common service that provides passenger and cargo transport in humanitarian situations. WFP will also provide specialized and on-demand aviation services, including airlift, air cargo, airdrops, air evacuations and dedicated bilateral services, to its United Nations partners and other humanitarian and development actors. Leveraging its network of aviation organizations and specialists, WFP will support national and regional aviation infrastructure and strengthen national and local safety and security aviation standards.

3.  Against the backdrop of unprecedented global need and increasingly complex situations, WFP is committed to working with its partners to ensure that no one is left behind and to provide agile aviation services while adhering to international safety standards. WFP is also committed to using flexible financing mechanisms and expanding its donor base to ensure its ability to continue operations and to reach people in need.

4.  WFP continues to operate in precarious, dynamic environments where humanitarian needs and the means to meet them are continually changing, requiring the WFP Aviation Service to adapt and innovate in a sustainable and effective way. Effective and adequate risk management is therefore an ever-present consideration in decision making. In line with WFP's 2018 enterprise risk management policy, the WFP Aviation Service's risk management processes are designed to provide structure, consistency and transparency in risk decision making across WFP-managed aviation services and field offices. It provides a framework whereby all risks – strategic, operational, fiduciary and financial – can be identified, assessed and managed in accordance with the organization's appetite for risk. The tools used include risk register management at the field level and adoption of a continuous monitoring approach and regular meetings of the aviation risk management forum at the headquarters level. To ensure accountability for taking action and addressing risk as a fundamental element of WFP's aviation risk management guidelines, a risk escalation process is well defined and is embedded in daily aviation functions.

5.  In high-risk environments, to inform actors about flights, the WFP Aviation Service utilizes the humanitarian notification system through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) or, when OCHA capacity is limited, the WFP Operational Access and Humanitarian–Military Interaction Unit. To address aviation security risks, the service actively engages in civil–military coordination on humanitarian operations with the military forces present in the setting. Such coordination is usually carried out through the Civil-Military Coordination Section of OCHA, which has the necessary capacity and processes available. Where there is a need for a more robust response, and/or when an additional coordination mechanism may be required in the air operation, the WFP Aviation Service is supported by the WFP Operational Access and Humanitarian–Military Interaction Unit, which works at the humanitarian–development–security nexus and ensures that WFP engages with military forces and armed groups in a principled way during humanitarian

relief operations. Specifically, the unit works with the Aviation Service to ensure that the notification process is transparent and that it meets the deconfliction needs of WFP in relation to the military processes of the parties to the conflict. This involves the use of dialogue and coordination mechanisms among various military, civil, security and humanitarian stakeholders, alongside pre-established relationships, and has the end goal of meeting WFP's operational requirements.

## Purpose of the policy

6. This policy sets out the vision, objectives, principles and partnerships that frame the WFP Aviation Service and UNHAS operations and describes the aviation governance framework. The policy is grounded in the humanitarian principles and WFP's commitment to provide aviation common services to all humanitarian actors. It also describes the role of essential enablers – partnerships, sustainable funding and a high-performing and agile workforce – in achieving the policy objectives and outlines the next steps for implementation and monitoring. In line with its mandate as a provider of last resort, WFP's role is not to replace the commercial sector but rather to fill in commercial transport market gaps. Importantly, WFP is committed to prioritizing the transport of all humanitarian workers and assistance.

7. At the June 2003 session of the High-Level Committee on Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, WFP accepted responsibility for administering all United Nations humanitarian and other air operations (excluding those for peacekeeping) as of 1 January 2004. In July 2003 the Executive Director of WFP signed a decision memorandum, based on the recommendations of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) on aviation operations and safety management, approving the reorganization of the WFP Aviation Service to enable it to meet its responsibilities. That was followed in December 2003 by the issuance of an Executive Director's circular (ED2003/008) establishing a special account for aviation services.

8. This policy has four aims:

   ➢ to state the objectives, principles and partnerships that frame aviation operations;

   ➢ to describe the aviation governance, accountability and reporting framework;

   ➢ to describe WFP's ambitions for humanitarian aviation, which include providing common services, such as those provided by UNHAS, to the humanitarian community and specialized and on-demand services to partners; facilitating coordination and communication between aviation and humanitarian stakeholders in the context of emergency response; and strengthening regional and national aviation systems and capacity; and

   ➢ to describe essential enablers (such as partnerships, sustainable funding and a high-performing and agile workforce) that will help ensure the sustainability of WFP's aviation activities and the continued delivery of humanitarian assistance in difficult circumstances.

## Principles

9. This policy is fully aligned with the principles set out in WFP's strategic plan for 2022–2025, including the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and operational independence. It also adheres to the belief that WFP's activities should be adapted to country circumstances and needs.

**International and United Nations aviation standards**

10.    WFP Aviation is committed to providing air transport services that meet ICAO standards and recommended practices,[2] United Nations Aviation Standards for Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Air Transport Operations (UNAVSTADS)[3] and the national civil aviation authority regulations in the countries where it operates. This includes WFP's active participation in the United Nations Aviation Technical Advisory Group (UNATAG), which was established to promote measures that reduce the level of risk associated with peacekeeping and humanitarian air transport operations.[4]

**Facilitation standards and practices**

11.    As stipulated in annex 9 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, on facilitation,[5] host governments will facilitate the entry into, departure from and transit through their territories of aircraft engaged in relief flights performed by – or on behalf of – international organizations recognized by the United Nations and will take all possible measures to ensure their safe operation. Such relief flights are those undertaken in response to disasters[6] that seriously endanger human health or the environment and similar emergency situations where United Nations assistance is required. Such flights will be commenced as quickly as possible after obtaining agreement with the host government, or in the case of cross-border operations, the recipient government. Basic agreements signed by governments and WFP in countries where WFP operates reaffirm that WFP is mandated to operate humanitarian flights in such countries.

**Environmental sustainability**

12.    WFP embraces the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and a world freed from hunger by socially equitable and environmentally responsible sustainable development. To reduce the negative impact of its operations on the environment and the people who depend on it, WFP is committed to integrating sustainability across all of its activities, including the aviation services that it provides. The purpose of the WFP Aviation Service environmental and sustainability programme is to operationalize WFP's commitment to continuous environmental improvement and the reduction of the carbon footprint of the aviation services that it manages, in line with WFP's environmental policy.[7]

13.    The programme defines and implements aviation-specific principles, goals and measures aimed at reducing the environmental impact of air transport service provision. WFP will work closely with external and internal technical and operational partners to update the programme as circumstances evolve. The programme is structured along three work streams:

   ➢    "We measure", consisting of establishing processes and adopting appropriate methodologies for identifying environmental risks and measuring the environmental impact of WFP aviation activities.

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[2] International Civil Aviation Organization. 2006. *Doc 7300/9 Convention on International Civil Aviation*.

[3] United Nations. 2012. *United Nations Aviation Standards for Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Air Transport Operations*.

[4] Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations. 2011. *United Nations air operations – Report of the Secretary-General (A/65/738).*

[5] International Civil Aviation Organization. 2022. *International Standards and Recommended Practices – Annex 9 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation: Facilitation, Sixteenth Edition*.

[6] United Nations secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2008. *Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response. Guidance and Indicator Package for Implementing Priority Five of the Hyogo Framework*.

[7] "*Environmental Policy*". (WFP/EB.1/2017/4-B/Rev.1).

➢ "We reduce", consisting of defining, implementing and monitoring measures aimed at reducing the overall environmental footprint of WFP aviation activities.

➢ "We offset", consisting of defining accountability and compensating for environmental impact of WFP aviation activities by taking positive action that supports green and climate protection projects.

14. Aware of its responsibility to the global environment, WFP places the control of the environmental impact and the protection of the environment as core themes of its operations and activities. The WFP Aviation Service, as an integral part of WFP supply chains, continues to engage with ICAO, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), civil aviation authorities, commercial airlines and contracted air carriers to pursue those goals both through advocacy and in its operations.

15. The WFP Aviation Service strives to boost its commitment to and expand its experience in environmental matters, signing agreements with technical aviation partners, participating in sustainable aviation fuel advocacy campaigns in preparation for the future use of sustainable aviation fuel by the air carriers contracted by WFP. The service is engaged in round table events related to the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation as part of a package of measures that include the operation of lighter and more efficient aircraft and hydrogen-powered and electric aircraft, the implementation of operational improvements and the use of sustainable aviation fuel. The WFP Aviation Service will remain engaged with private sector service providers to ensure access to and knowledge of up-to-date technologies.

16. Environmental key performance indicators have been established to measure the carbon dioxide ($CO_2$) emission levels of aircraft chartered by WFP. The WFP Aviation Service compares, analyses and measures operational data that inform operational and strategic decision making by management, using the following key performance indicators:

➢ $CO_2$ emissions from the global aircraft fleet chartered by WFP; and

➢ total emissions per passenger-kilometre.

17. The various committees involved in aviation procurement (see paragraphs 34–37) gather and store vital data on the environmental impact of each of the aircraft used in order to support decision making. To tackle the requirement for reducing its environmental footprint, the WFP Aviation Service's partner service operators are required to mitigate high-risk environmental impacts by adopting an environmental management system that specifies the mitigation actions undertaken or to be undertaken in order to tackle those impacts.

18. Relevant statistical data on the environmental impact of aviation operations are included in the WFP Aviation Service annual report, together with a trend analysis and a list of the mitigation actions taken.

**Emergency preparedness**

19. WFP employs an emergency preparedness and response framework.[8] WFP prioritizes the agility of its operations in often challenging and at times rapidly shifting environments while maintaining rigorous air safety standards. An emergency preparedness approach helps to ensure effective response through established tools and scenario-based planning, including enhanced and strategically located aircraft capacity with minimal deployment time that is supported by a qualified workforce. This also entails working closely with aviation and humanitarian partners to establish emergency regulatory frameworks – as required – to

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[8] "Emergency preparedness policy: Strengthening WFP emergency preparedness for effective response". (WFP/EB.2/2017/4-B/Rev.1).

enable the efficient and timely transport of humanitarian actors and supplies in emergencies.

**Access eligibility and customer-centred service provision**

20. WFP is committed to meeting the needs of its clients with the aim of helping humanitarian and development actors to become more efficient and effective. WFP adopts industry benchmarks to the extent possible, providing reliable service, catering to customer concerns and minimizing transactional processes.

21. Accepting the mandate given by the High-Level Committee on Management and the responsibility for administering all United Nations humanitarian and other air operations, WFP, by means of the passenger prioritization system (detailed in paragraphs 56–58), facilitates equal access to UNHAS for all organizations engaged in life-saving humanitarian interventions, including but not limited to international and national NGOs, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and the diplomatic community.

**Disability inclusion**

22. In accordance with WFP's commitment to promoting disability inclusion in all its activities,[9] the WFP Aviation Service will ensure that the rights and needs of passengers with disabilities are respected. This will be done through efficient and consistent implementation to ensure accessibility for passengers with disabilities and those with additional specific needs.

23. The WFP Aviation Service will work with its service providers to:

➢ ensure that disability inclusion becomes a fully integrated element in all the aviation services that it provides by establishing an inclusive culture;

➢ identify and eliminate barriers to the employment and retention of persons with disabilities and promote a workplace culture based on fair practices that safeguard the rights of those persons to be treated with dignity and respect and to enjoy equal terms and conditions of employment; and

➢ facilitate air travel through the formulation of additional detailed guidelines and procedures that ensure respect for the privacy of individuals.

**Sexual exploitation and abuse protection**

24. In line with WFP policy, the WFP Aviation Service is committed to upholding a zero tolerance policy in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse[10] as part of the continued efforts of all humanitarian, development and peacekeeping missions of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. WFP is committed to upholding the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse,[11] and all staff members and partners of the WFP Aviation Service are contractually required to follow those principles and conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of integrity set out in the United Nations Charter, the relevant standards and codes of conduct and the applicable staff rules and regulations.

**Personal data protection**

25. The WFP Aviation Service, as a data controller, collects and processes a large volume of personal data of all passengers and data subjects concerned by WFP humanitarian air operations. The protection of personal data is essential and the WFP Aviation Service is committed to guaranteeing the highest level of protection for all customers and users of its

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[9] "WFP disability inclusion road map (2020–2021)". (WFP/EB.2/2020/4-B).

[10] WFP. 2014. *Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse* (Executive Director's circular OED2014/020)

[11] Inter-Agency Standing Committee. 2019. *IASC Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*.

air services in a manner consistent with relevant internationally recognized standards and practices and fundamental rights of individuals and groups of individuals, including the United Nations Personal Data Protection and Privacy Principles.[12]

## Governance framework

26. Under the overall guidance of the Executive Board and the direction of WFP's Executive Director and leadership group, the established governance framework will continue to assure the highest standards of aviation safety, security and quality of air transport service. The framework comprises external and internal mechanisms that provide strategic oversight of aviation activities, procurement and compliance with international safety regulations and standards.

### WFP aviation safety regulatory framework

27. WFP's aviation safety regulatory framework comprises policies, standards and practices[13] that ensure the highest level of safety and compliance across the Aviation Service, the Aviation Safety Unit and all units and activities related to aviation at headquarters, the regional bureaux and the country offices.

28. The aviation safety regulatory framework consists of the following elements:

   ➢ policies and objectives based on the WFP General Rules and Regulations, UNAVSTADS and ICAO standards and recommended practice;

   ➢ integrated standards and procedures aimed at improving and maintaining aviation safety, aligned with the ICAO State Safety Programme and Safety Management System framework and international standards and recommended practices;

   ➢ integrated risk management – i.e. the systematic identification, assessment and management of risk as outlined in WFP's 2018 enterprise risk management policy[14] – to ensure that WFP meets regulatory and safety performance requirements.

### United Nations Aviation Technical Advisory Group

29. The regulatory framework is supported by UNATAG, an interagency group that meets twice a year to review amendments to UNAVSTADS standards and procedures and ensures compliance with international safety standards and operational requirements. UNATAG also promotes measures to reduce the level of risk associated with the United Nations system's civil air transport operations. The permanent members of UNATAG are the Department of Operational Support and WFP, with ICAO in an advisory capacity. Among other things, UNATAG's role is to:

   ➢ advise the United Nations system on aviation operational and safety matters;

   ➢ periodically review and amend UNAVSTADS for consistency with international safety standards and/or operational requirements;

   ➢ periodically review the implementation of UNAVSTADS;

   ➢ review safety recommendations and propose actions to mitigate risk and reduce organizational exposure;

   ➢ periodically review common procedures for air transport service and safety management;

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[12] United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. 2018. Principles on Personal Data Protection and Privacy.

[13] WFP Air Transport Manual; WFP. 2009. *Aviation Safety Manual*; and WFP.2015. *Aviation Safety Unit Manual*.

[14] "2018 enterprise risk management policy". (WFP/EB.2/2018/5-C).

> ➢ review the results of external audits of the Department of Operational Support and WFP Aviation operations;

> ➢ facilitate the sharing of operational, safety and security information among United Nations stakeholders; and

> ➢ advise on and undertake activities that enhance interoperability between the Department of Operational Support and the WFP Aviation Service.

**WFP Aviation Safety Board**

30. The Aviation Safety Board is an advisory board responsible for reviewing and advising on issues related to the safety of WFP aviation operations. It is chaired by the Deputy Executive Director, Supply Chain and Emergencies Department, who acts in the capacity of "accountable executive",[15] accountable to the Executive Director for the safety of WFP aviation operations. The Aviation Safety Board convenes twice per year, or as required by the chair. Members of the Aviation Safety Board include divisional directors and dedicated aviation experts from ICAO and the Flight Safety Foundation, in accordance with the applicable Executive Director decision memorandum.[16] The Aviation Safety Unit acts as the secretariat for the Aviation Safety Board and oversees the implementation of its recommendations.

31. The role of the Aviation Safety Board is to advise on:

> ➢ WFP aviation policy and strategic issues;

> ➢ the safety policy for the WFP Aviation Service;

> ➢ the role and functions of the Aviation Safety Unit;

> ➢ funding and expenditures for the Aviation Safety Unit;

> ➢ the safety performance of the WFP Aviation Service; and

> ➢ high-impact risks presented by the WFP Aviation Service.

**WFP Air Transport Committee**

32. The WFP Air Transport Committee is chaired by the Director of the Supply Chain Operations Division. Meetings are held at least twice a year. As discussion items may require the attention of the Aviation Safety Board, the Air Transport Committee meetings are scheduled before those of the board. The members of the committee include personnel from WFP's Legal Office, Risk and Insurance Unit, Aviation Safety Unit and Aviation Service.

33. The Air Transport Committee reviews and makes recommendations on the following:

> ➢ air transport contracting actions, procedures and principles;

> ➢ performance evaluations and assessment reports; and

> ➢ air transport guidance material.

**Procurement**

34. Given the nature of humanitarian operations and the need to react quickly to emergencies, the WFP Aviation Service at headquarters will maintain a centralized aircraft contracting function for all types of services provided by managing a list of air operators and air brokers who are pre-approved by the Aviation Safety Unit as being technically qualified, registered in accordance with UNAVSTADS requirements and strategically positioned to timely provide air transport services.

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[15] International Civil Aviation Organization terminology.

[16] Executive Director's decision memorandum AA56032(02.08.19) dated 22 July 2019.

35.		A rigorous evaluation process is in place, entailing detailed technical and financial analysis of offers received from commercial air carriers, the review of commercial air carrier performance evaluations and the review of compliance and safety issues associated with potential commercial air carriers and areas of operation. An electronic tendering system[17] ensures a robust procurement process for air assets and ancillary aviation functions such as fuel and ground handling services as well as compliance with requirements and procedures, including with regard to confidentiality, security and segregation of duties.

36.		WFP embeds time sensitivity in its air transport services procurement procedures, ensuring best value for money, safety and quality standards and sustainability in meeting the requirements of the humanitarian community.

37.		The Air Transport Contracts Committee evaluates all offers and formulates recommendations based on the following elements:

➢		aircraft and air operator technical documentation;

➢		the Aviation Safety Unit's advice on air operator compliance and the safety implications of operating a specific type of aircraft in the environment where it is to be used;

➢		environmental considerations; and

➢		financial considerations.

## Services provided by the WFP Aviation Service

38.		WFP is committed to providing aviation services for humanitarian and development organizations in humanitarian emergencies, transporting passengers and cargo for other United Nations entities, NGOs, international financial institutions and other partners. WFP activities at the country level will continue to include implementation of key service modalities such as UNHAS and specialized and on-demand services; the strengthening of national and local aviation systems; and measures to promote environmental sustainability.[18]

**UNHAS operations**

39.		The opening and closure of any UNHAS aviation field operation is undertaken at the request of the United Nations humanitarian coordinator, based on a rigorous technical assessment carried out in close consultation with the humanitarian community and donor organizations and taking into consideration the fact that UNHAS's role is not to replace the commercial sector, but rather to fill gaps in the commercial transport market.

40.		The primary objective of UNHAS aviation field operations is to provide safe, efficient and effective air transport services for humanitarian and development actors, facilitating the implementation of humanitarian projects and ensuring access to affected populations in hard-to-reach areas.

41.		Building up on the mandate given by the High-Level Committee on Management, WFP has fully accepted the responsibility and authority for effectively managing UNHAS operations, achieving and maintaining an acceptable level of safety and aviation security. WFP is committed to promoting an inclusive humanitarian common air service by involving humanitarian users and the donor community in decision making processes at the country level.

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[17] WFP uses an account from In-tend | Procurement Solutions.

[18] WFP's 2005 policy on exiting emergencies outlines when and how WFP ends an emergency response.

### UNHAS governance framework

*UNHAS steering committees*

42. Each UNHAS country operation is guided by a steering committee. The purpose of the committee is to review and provide overall guidance on the smooth running of UNHAS. The committee will usually meet quarterly, and at least twice in each calendar year, unless an urgent need calls for a review of the operational strategy, a fundraising effort or a change in policy. Each steering committee is chaired by the United Nations humanitarian coordinator for the country and co-chaired by the WFP country representative. Steering committee members comprise two representatives of each of the following entities: United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, non-governmental organizations and the donor community. The committee guides UNHAS operations in the following areas:

   ➢ UNHAS funding modalities (cost recovery and free service) and the cost-recovery fee;

   ➢ UNHAS networks and the destinations to be flown to;

   ➢ the eligibility of organizations to use the air service;

   ➢ priority areas for services and related costs;

   ➢ the review of host government policies on humanitarian air transport; and

   ➢ advocacy and resource mobilization to sustain the service.

43. The steering committee makes decisions on administrative and policy issues only. Decisions in respect of aircraft operations, safety and aviation security issues are made solely by UNHAS, based on its operations, safety and aviation security guidelines.

44. Each UNHAS country operation is accountable to its steering committee. This includes periodically reporting on operational, financial and customer service matters, including but not limited to overview of passenger and cargo traffic, destinations served, fleet composition, donor contributions and cost recovery, customers survey results and complaints.

*UNHAS user group committees*

45. In addition to the UNHAS steering committee, a UNHAS user group committee is established as part of each UNHAS country operation. The user group committee is chaired by the UNHAS Chief Air Transport Officer, and its members include representatives of organizations eligible to use UNHAS services. The purpose of the user group is to promote the interests of users in the movement of passengers and cargo within the area of operations in order to fulfil the needs of the humanitarian community. The UNHAS user group committee improves the services provided by UNHAS by:

   ➢ integrating user preferences into decisions about the movement of passengers and cargo;

   ➢ periodically analysing operational requirements for UNHAS implementation; and

   ➢ sharing information regarding quality of service and details on bookings, schedules, clearance requirements and associated costs.

*UNHAS operations accountability*

46. The WFP Aviation Service is committed to attaining the highest standards of accountability. This means optimizing its performance management system to realize the most effective and efficient use of resources, conducting monitoring to generate evidence for decision making and supporting effective project-level and corporate reporting. Efficiency is a core value for the WFP Aviation Service and has become increasingly critical when the available funding is insufficient to assist the increasing number of people facing hunger. UNHAS

demonstrates the effective implementation of its humanitarian services, measured through key performance indicators that comprise a strategic compendium of operational and financial indicators, including but not limited to:

➢ total number of passengers transported;

➢ percentage of users satisfied with the services provided;

➢ number of organizations actively using UNHAS;

➢ number of medical and security evacuations carried out;

➢ number of destinations/service locations served;

➢ cost per passenger-kilometre; and

➢ percentage of bookings fulfilled.

### *Humanitarian principles*

47.    In all circumstances, WFP's humanitarian action remains need-based and in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Each UNHAS operation will fully adhere to the humanitarian principles:

➢ only passengers travelling on humanitarian missions shall be accepted on UNHAS flights;

➢ no humanitarian donor funding shall be used for transportation of exceptional categories of passengers; and

➢ carriage of uniformed personnel and individuals wearing military uniforms and transportation of firearms or weapons are not permitted except for close protection personnel when strictly necessary for the maintenance of the security of passengers such as those categorized as Very Important Persons (VIPs).

### *UNHAS financing*

48.    At the country level, UNHAS operations are financed through country strategic plans (CSPs). UNHAS steering committees will continue to determine UNHAS operation funding modalities, including regarding cost recovery (the fee charged to organizations for the transport of passengers or cargo). The role of the committees is to reinforce shared ownership by users, an important facet of common services. While contributions from donor governments, intergovernmental organizations and multilateral funds are the principal source of funding for UNHAS operations, cost recovery will continue to provide supplemental funding and help to promote use of the service for essential humanitarian needs.

49.    WFP's centralized funding mechanism will enable the organization to centrally receive contributions earmarked for UNHAS operations, giving WFP the flexibility to allocate them to CSPs. Funds will be reallocated to country portfolio budgets for aviation operations at the onset of humanitarian crises, enhancing predictability and speed in emergency response.

*Cost recovery fares*

50.    There are three main funding models for UNHAS:

➢ Full cost recovery: the cost of an operation is entirely funded by the users of the service. This includes all operational costs as well as other costs in respect of staff, services, equipment, facilities, logistics and administrative support.

> ➤ Partial cost recovery: the cost of an operation is partly covered by donor contributions, with additional revenue generated through cost recovery fares applied to user organizations for services provided. The partial cost recovery funding model aims to:

- • promote accountable and responsible attitudes on the part of the user organizations towards common service and minimizing the number of no-shows;

- • improve the quality of service and humanitarian access through optimized air asset utilization;

- • address funding shortfalls when donor organizations are not able to cover all the costs in providing in-country aviation services.

> ➤ Fully donor-funded: the total cost of an operation is covered solely by donor contributions.

51. All UNHAS operations are to apply a cost-recovery funding model. Newly established operations should, as soon as feasible, move from a fully donor-funded to a cost-recovery funding model. The setting up of a cost-recovery system requires time, and humanitarian organizations operating in newly declared emergency operations will not have budgeted for air transport costs, as these will not yet be known. Therefore, at the onset of an emergency, in coordination with the humanitarian coordinator, the humanitarian community and the donor community, the newly established UNHAS operation will apply a fully donor-funded costing model, typically for the first 120 days, after which, if the UNHAS operation continues to be required, it should move to a cost-recovery funding model.

52. UNHAS will undertake a periodic analysis of funding, performance and humanitarian aspects of operations, based in part on a passenger no-show analysis to define appropriate cost recovery fares for each category of passengers. Fair fee reviews will be developed for different user organisation categories, including local NGOs which as a general rule are charged less than the other categories of user agencies. This is to support the promotion of the localisation of the humanitarian action.

*Review of cost recovery fares and carry-over balances*

53. As the funding mechanisms are based on a combination of donor contributions and cost recovery, both cost recovery fares and funding balances require constant monitoring to ensure the effective use of resources and the availability of funds for the optimal provision of access to humanitarian workers as well as the continuous sustainability of operations. Each UNHAS operation shall annually review established fares and maintain, at a minimum, a three-month carryover balance to the following year, reporting the same to the steering committee.

54. The proposed cost recovery fares require coordination, approval and reporting procedures emphasizing the critical role of the steering committee for implementation of the cost recovery system and shall consider the following elements, understanding that different fares could be requested from different types of organizations, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, international NGOs, local NGOs and members of the diplomatic community:

> ➤ funding factors;

> ➤ humanitarian factors;

> ➤ performance factors; and

> ➤ no-show factors.

55. UNHAS requests large-scale infrastructure projects to support the national civil aviation and airport authorities in the areas where UNHAS operates, subject to approval by the steering committee at the country level and using funds from source separates from the usual UNHAS financing sources.

*Passenger prioritization system*

56. WFP seeks to accommodate all submitted eligible humanitarian passengers' requests on a first come, first served basis within each priority category. To give effect to this the following passenger prioritization system has been established:

  ➤ The first priority remains for emergency relocations or evacuations such as medical and security evacuations.

  ➤ The second priority is for the travel of personnel of registered NGOs and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, with higher priority for life-saving humanitarian responses. A higher priority will be assigned to the transport of personnel engaged in programme criticality level 1 activities, followed by those engaged in level 2 and then those in level 3.

  ➤ The third priority is for travel of the personnel of registered embassies, diplomatic community and the World Bank and other financial institutions.

57. With the purpose of promoting a safe travel environment, improving the effectiveness and efficiency of service and increasing cost-recovery funds, WFP in coordination with the steering committees may establish exceptional systems for the allocation of empty non-reserved seats to the following categories of passengers. UNHAS funding will not be used to support the transport of passengers in these categories, and they are to always travel on a full-cost recovery basis:

  ➤ non-personnel members endorsed by registered user organizations, such as dependents, implementing partners and media personnel;

  ➤ national government officials: registered user organizations may request UNHAS to accommodate national government officials that are critical to implementation of their humanitarian projects in a country of operation;

  ➤ refugees and internally displaced persons, only in connection with projects of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration; and

  ➤ crew members of contracted air operators travelling for crew rotation purposes.

58. WFP will respect the humanitarian principles and exercise due diligence in seeking clearance and managing these exceptional travel requests. Such requests will be facilitated on a full cost-recovery basis.

*Exit strategy and fleet composition*

59. Considering the temporary nature of the common air transport service and its close alignment with SDG targets, each UNHAS operation must undertake an annual review to monitor the objective conditions required to maintain the common service provision at the country level. The review is based on the following three main pillars:

  ➤ a review of the country of operation's commercial air transport market and alternative means of travel;

  ➤ UNHAS performance assessment, including but not limited to passenger and cargo networks, corresponding demands and the aircraft fleet; and

  ➤ stakeholder feedback.

60. Each UNHAS operation must present this review and its conclusions, comprising required service level and corresponding fleet composition, to the relevant WFP country office, the Chief of the WFP Aviation Service and the relevant steering committee for endorsement on an annual basis.

**On-demand bilateral services**

61. WFP's strategic plan for 2022–2025 calls for the provision of services, both mandated and on-demand, to be expanded to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian and development communities. Such services include dedicated air transport services for humanitarian and development actors (United Nations entities, NGOs, donors) and cargo transport provided at the global and country levels.

62. Humanitarian organizations may request WFP to provide on-demand bilateral air transport services. Such services are provided under the auspices of the WFP supply chain strategic road map for 2022–2025, building on WFP's field presence, market knowledge, expertise and scale and in full conformity with humanitarian principles.

63. On-demand bilateral services are fully funded by the requesting partner, assessed and reported on based on the WFP corporate results framework and additional performance indicators as requested by the requesting partner.

**Specialized air transport services**

64. Specialized air transport services such as airlifts and airdrops for food deliveries during emergency operations, and airfreight services provided as part of WFP's contribution to SDG 2, are fully funded by WFP and are reported on through corporate mechanisms.

65. In addition to food transport operations, the WFP Aviation Service provides cargo air transport services to support humanitarian interventions and fulfil emergency and protracted aviation requirements. Owing to its expertise in humanitarian logistics, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee chose WFP as the lead agency for the logistics cluster and to serve as a "provider of last resort" in offering common logistics services when critical gaps hamper the humanitarian response. Where necessary, the logistics cluster will coordinate and facilitate access to common logistics services for humanitarian partners, including relief air transport of cargo provided by WFP in accordance with humanitarian priorities established by the United Nations country team or humanitarian coordinator.

66. As part of WFP's supply chain activities, the air operations of the WFP Aviation Service are requested by WFP country offices and undertaken in conformance with WFP supply chain procedures.[19] The effectiveness and cost-efficiency of such services are ensured through internal assessments that determine the most appropriate mode of transport based on operational requirements, balancing the speed, flexibility, reliability and cost of each transport type. The mode or modes of transport selected should provide an optimal solution that takes into account the nature of the goods to be moved, the urgency of the need and the minimization of cost. However, it is important to note that the most appropriate mode may not be the least costly option.

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[19] WFP Transport and Logistics Services Manual.

## Objectives at the global level

### Strengthening regional and national aviation systems and capacity

67. WFP will leverage its experience, presence and partnerships to strengthen regional and national aviation systems and capacity. As the reality of humanitarian contexts means that national or local safety and security standards are frequently less than optimal, WFP's response and activities will support more sustainable aviation solutions whenever feasible.[11] Depending on the context, this can include runway and airport terminal construction and repair, safety and security training and the introduction of new technology.

68. WFP will also continue to collaborate with industry stakeholders such as ICAO and IATA, as well as with national civil aviation authorities and local operators and suppliers, on the development of regulatory frameworks and on the development of procedures and risk management in fragile countries where gaps exist.

69. The aim of such collaboration will be to create and implement solutions to the challenges of humanitarian air access and to provide long-term sustainable solutions to the host authorities in various strategic areas, particularly to ensure access to remote airfields and airstrips for humanitarian personnel and logistics. Through collaboration, WFP will seek to:

   ➢ enhance overall civil aviation safety by increasing the state's capabilities in oversight;

   ➢ increase air navigation capacity and efficiency, primarily by upgrading the performance of infrastructure and systems for air navigation at aerodromes;

   ➢ enhance civil aviation security capacity and facilitate aviation security at remote airstrips and aerodromes; and

   ➢ support the civil aviation sector in project countries in all aviation-related environmental activities, consistent with environmental protection policies and practices.

### Acting as a facilitator in humanitarian response

70. WFP will leverage its role in emergency response by promoting the implementation of a comprehensive collaboration framework between governments, regional organizations, the humanitarian community and international civil aviation stakeholders by providing key practices for implementing effective preparedness and response measures. WFP will facilitate effective communication flow between stakeholders, timely identifying operational issues and addressing the gap between humanitarian needs and operational capabilities in emergency settings.

71. With the purpose of promoting an effective emergency response and avoiding duplication of efforts, WFP will lead an effort to promote continual dialogue at the global and country levels among humanitarian aviation stakeholders such as the European Union Humanitarian Air Bridge, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Mission Aviation Fellowship and Partners in Aviation and Communications Technology.

## Essential enablers

72. Essential enablers – partnerships, sustainable financing and a high-performing and agile workforce – will increase WFP's ability to achieve its aviation objectives. These align with the enablers identified in WFP's strategic plan for 2022–2025, positioning the aviation policy within a broader WFP corporate framework.

**Partnerships**

73.    WFP's governance and operations are grounded in credible and active partnerships, including with governments, other United Nations entities, NGOs, international financial institutions, the diplomatic and donor communities and the private sector. The vast NGO network will continue to be a crucial partner for WFP in the delivery of common services, and WFP will rely on NGO participation in UNHAS mechanisms to ensure that common services are efficient and equitable and prioritize humanitarian action. Localization and the increasingly active role of national and local authorities and civil society will provide an opportunity for WFP to play an enabling role, providing technical advice and strengthening national and local emergency aviation response capacity. Identified as one of the key enablers in WFP's strategic plan for 2022–2025, partnerships play a crucial role in the WFP Aviation Service's operations.

74.    Partnership and coordination with other humanitarian air transport service providers such as the International Red Cross, Médecins Sans Frontières, the Mission Aviation Fellowship and PACTEC will help improve synergies and strengthen coordinated service delivery.

75.    WFP is also committed to systematic strategic and technical engagement with international aviation organizations, regulatory bodies and humanitarian air transport service providers. Partnerships with ICAO, IATA, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency and the Flight Safety Foundation will continue to help ensure the quality and safety of WFP aviation activities. WFP will use partnerships to enhance its response capability through knowledge sharing and access to skills and innovation in the industry; for example, IATA has reviewed and helped improve WFP's internal procedures on aircraft contracting and market assessment.

**Sustainable financing**

76.    WFP will aim to ensure predictable funding through the promotion of flexible financing mechanisms and expansion of the donor base.[20] WFP air operations are financed through CSPs, WFP's aviation centralized mechanism and WFP's aviation special account. The purpose of the latter is to manage costs attributed to headquarters services and ad hoc operations and to provide bridge funding for emergencies.

77.    The purpose of the aviation special account is to manage costs attributed to headquarters services and ad hoc operations and to provide bridge funding for emergencies. Since its establishment, the costs of activities funded from the aviation special account have been covered by the management cost recovery fees recovered from aviation clients.

78.    The increasing demand for UNHAS services calls for an evaluation of the current funding model aimed at ascertaining whether it is adequate to avert or mitigate the risk of suspensions to operations due to resourcing constraints. In addition to local fundraising efforts, WFP will establish a centralized funding mechanism to receive contributions earmarked for UNHAS activities that are not directed to specific CSPs. This new approach will yield increased flexibility for funding allocation and swifter response to urgent needs. The model will also enable timelier, predictable and efficient funding allocations in response to sudden humanitarian crises. The centralized funding mechanism will not substitute local fundraising or advocacy efforts. On the contrary, operations will benefit from a mix of directed contributions for UNHAS activities under CSPs while being eligible for softly earmarked contributions received at the global level.

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[20] "*Private-sector partnerships and fundraising strategy (2020–2025)*". (WFP/EB.2/2019/4-A/Rev.1).

**High-performing and agile workforce**

79. In line with the WFP people policy,[21] the WFP Aviation Service will shape, manage and develop its workforce to ensure that it is able to meet the shifting demands of the complex environments in which it operates. An agile workforce is vital for operating in humanitarian settings and supporting the organization's mandate, which calls for specialized operations such as airdrops and medical and security evacuations. WFP will continue to invest in a diverse, committed, skilled and high-performing workforce that is selected on merit. Learning and training opportunities for professional development and the capture and exchange of knowledge and lessons learned are also a priority.

80. Sustainable, safe and secure humanitarian aviation relies on the availability of qualified and competent employees, supervisors and managers to plan, coordinate, manage, operate, maintain and oversee complex operations and UNHAS missions globally. As aviation staff fulfil a critical role in enabling the WFP Aviation Service to effectively respond to sudden-onset emergencies, it is imperative to ensure that the workforce has skills and competencies that match the working environment. The WFP Aviation Service will facilitate this by effective recruitment and training plans addressing talent management, retention and succession planning. In addition, the WFP Aviation Service will expand skill sets and attract new talent from industry to ensure that it has an agile pool of aviation professionals with equitable geographical representation and gender balance.

**Evidence generation**

81. In line with corporate and divisional strategy, the WFP Aviation Service will strive to make headway in data collection and analysis for evidence-based decision making. The WFP Aviation Service will use its corporate data platforms such as DOTS, the Performance Management Tool and the Standard Monitoring and Implementation Level Evaluation Tool to enhance the accessibility of operational data. Once a substantial change, opportunity, threat or risk is identified in the operational environment, the WFP Aviation Service will be able to access and analyse all relevant data so as to make decisions based on circumstantial evidence.

82. All cargo and personnel transported are registered through an existing WFP booking system and are systematically documented and manifested for air carriage. WFP is the sole authority administering the approvals on the carriage of passengers, baggage, and cargo and keeps a record of all Passenger Booking Lists, Airway bills, commodities, and passenger manifests; additionally passenger identity, as well as cargo contents, are rigorously checked during check-in and boarding procedures.

**Innovative humanitarian air transport solutions**

83. WFP supports the development of remotely piloted aircraft systems and unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) cargo delivery solutions, which will enhance air transport capabilities while reducing the level of risk associated with humanitarian air transport operations. WFP has established strategic partnerships with leading airship manufacturers, which will enhance its response capabilities through greener and more efficient air transport and facilitate knowledge exchange, the leverage of innovations and access to talent in the aviation industry.

84. WFP has established a framework[22] for the safe and secure operation of UAS by WFP personnel, ensuring compliance with the minimum standards for UAS operations and assigning the management of UAS cargo delivery to the WFP Aviation Service, in line with international practice in the aviation industry, and the management of UAS data and

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[21] "*WFP people policy*". (WFP/EB.A/2021/5-A).

[22] WFP. 2017. *Use of Drones in Humanitarian Crises and Other Operation*s (Executive Director's circular OED2017/006).

connectivity operations to the Technology Division, with technical guidance from the WFP Aviation Service as required.

85. WFP will continue to explore opportunities for strategic partnerships that enhance response capabilities through knowledge exchange, the leveraging of innovations and access to talents in the industry, and that strengthen the visibility of WFP and broaden its advocacy for resources.

## Implementation

86. Implementation of the aviation policy will be achieved through change management on two levels:

➢ Under the leadership of senior management, the Director of the Supply Chain Operations Division and the Chief of the Aviation Service will ensure that the action at headquarters and the regional level necessary to put in place the essential enablers and achieve the objectives is taken.

➢ The WFP Aviation Service will be responsible for reviewing relevant policy documents, guidance and operational plans to ensure their normative and operational alignment with the new aviation policy. For example, WFP will ensure that relevant components of the aviation policy are captured in the air transport manual, an internal guidance document for staff engaged in WFP air transport operations, covering standards, regulations and recommended practices.

87. The WFP Aviation Service will communicate the aviation policy to WFP headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices, partners and donors, ensuring that they understand the objectives, principles, governance framework, partnerships and activities of the WFP Aviation Service. Implementation of the policy will be covered by WFP's existing planning and budgeting processes.

## Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

88. Monitoring of and reporting on implementation of the policy will be based on the key performance indicators established as part of WFP's corporate results framework and annual performance planning process.

89. The Office of Evaluation will conduct an independent evaluation of the policy between four and six years after it is endorsed to assess the continued relevance and effectiveness of the policy, its implementation and whether it should be updated.

## Acronyms

| | |
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| CO2 | carbon dioxide |
| COVID-19 | coronavirus disease 2019 |
| CSP | country strategic plan |
| IATA | International Air Transport Association |
| ICAO | International Civil Aviation Organization |
| NGO | non-governmental organization |
| OCHA | Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| UAS | unmanned aircraft systems |
| UNATAG | United Nations Aviation Technical Advisory Group |
| UNAVSTADS | United Nations Aviation Standards for Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Air Transport Operations |
| UNHAS | United Nations Humanitarian Air Service |