ICWC

INTERNATIONAL CLOUD WELFARE COMMISSION

COMMISSION STATEMENT 2026/01

# The Clouds Were Participating Here First

*Statement on Atmospheric Participation, Shared Airspace, Cloud Wellbeing and Recognition*

Adopted 10 September 2026

*For Healthy Skies and Shared Tomorrows*

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# Commission Statement 2026/01

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## STATUS OF THIS STATEMENT

Commission Statement 2026/01 is the foundational public declaration of the International Cloud Welfare Commission. Subsequent Commission policy briefs, technical papers, consultation papers, statements and assessments may rely upon the principles and defined terms established herein, subject to the evidentiary and methodological requirements set out in Article 8.

Where a subsequent publication relies upon this Statement as authority, the applicable Article should be identified. The appearance of a Commission-developed term or framework in this Statement does not, by itself, establish that term or framework as recognized atmospheric science or international law.

PREAMBLE

# Statement of Recognition

**Recognizing** that clouds constitute persistent and materially significant components of the Earth's atmospheric, hydrological and climatic systems, and that their formation, transformation, movement and dissipation occur independently of the administrative, economic and territorial systems established by human beings;

**Acknowledging** that clouds are not static objects but continuously evolving atmospheric formations consisting principally of water droplets, ice crystals, or combinations thereof, and that they participate in the transport and transformation of water and energy throughout the Earth system;

**Noting** that approximately two-thirds of the Earth's surface is typically covered by clouds and that clouds play substantial roles in the global water cycle and the Earth's energy balance;[1]

**Further noting** that the World Meteorological Organization recognizes ten principal cloud genera and further classifies clouds according to species, varieties, supplementary features, accessory clouds, mother-clouds and special clouds, demonstrating both the diversity of cloud formations and the longstanding international scientific effort devoted to their systematic observation;[2]

**Recognizing** that modern aviation has substantially altered the relationship between human activity and the atmosphere by enabling routine entry into, passage through and modification of atmospheric environments previously encountered primarily through observation from the Earth's surface;

**Acknowledging** that aircraft operations can, under suitable atmospheric conditions, contribute to persistent contrails and aviation-induced cirrus, and that international aviation institutions continue to study the climatic consequences and possible mitigation of such interactions;[3]

**Concerned** that prevailing descriptions of the atmosphere frequently characterize it principally as airspace, transportation infrastructure, navigational environment, economic resource or meteorological condition, thereby placing human utility at the centre of systems that existed long before human aviation;

**Recognizing** that the inability of an atmospheric phenomenon to communicate through human institutions does not render its physical presence, ecological function or interaction with human activity irrelevant;

**Affirming** that responsible stewardship begins with accurate observation and that recognition should precede assumption;

**Hereby adopts** the following Statement on Atmospheric Participation, Shared Airspace, Cloud Wellbeing and Recognition.

ARTICLE 1

# Purpose and Scope

**1.1** The purpose of this Statement is to establish the foundational principles governing the work of the International Cloud Welfare Commission and to provide a common framework through which cloud conditions, atmospheric participation and human interaction with cloud environments may be considered.

**1.2** This Statement proceeds from the determination that human activity within the atmosphere does not occur within vacant space. The atmosphere is a dynamic planetary system in which water, energy, particles, gases and atmospheric formations continuously interact, and clouds constitute conspicuous and materially significant participants within that system.

**1.3** Nothing in this Statement shall be interpreted as asserting that clouds possess human consciousness, human emotional states, legal personality or an independently demonstrated capacity to exercise consent as that concept is presently understood in human law.

**1.4** The Commission nevertheless finds that the absence of such characteristics does not justify treating clouds solely according to their utility, inconvenience or significance to human activities.

**1.5** The Commission accordingly establishes a framework of recognition rather than personification. The purpose of that framework is to examine what becomes visible when atmospheric phenomena are considered not merely as background conditions but as existing participants within systems that human beings have subsequently entered and modified.

ARTICLE 2

## Definitions

**2.1** **Atmospheric Participation** means the continuing presence, function or material involvement of an atmospheric phenomenon within the physical processes of the atmosphere, irrespective of intention, permanence, economic productivity or capacity for direct representation within human institutions.

**2.2** **Cloud Wellbeing** means the Commission-developed analytical framework through which the conditions affecting the formation, persistence, transformation and dissipation of clouds may be considered with particular attention to anthropogenic influence. The term does not constitute a scientific assertion concerning cloud consciousness, emotion or subjective experience.

**2.3** **Aviation-Cloud Interaction** means any direct or indirect interaction between aviation activity and an existing or subsequently formed cloud environment, including physical transit through clouds and atmospheric modification associated with aircraft operations.

**2.4** **Shared Airspace Responsibility** means the principle that human use of the atmosphere should acknowledge and, where reasonably possible, account for pre-existing atmospheric processes and conditions rather than presume that the atmosphere constitutes vacant infrastructure.

**2.5** **Atmospheric Consent** means a Commission-developed ethical and policy framework for considering interventions within atmospheric environments where the affected atmospheric participant cannot provide or withhold consent through mechanisms recognized by human institutions.

**2.6** The definitions contained in this Article are adopted for the purposes of the Commission's work and shall not be represented as established terminology of atmospheric science or international law unless independently recognized as such.

ARTICLE 3

## Findings of the Commission

**3.1** The Commission finds that clouds are integral components of the Earth's water cycle. Water evaporated from the surface enters the atmosphere, condenses under appropriate conditions, forms clouds and may subsequently return to the surface through precipitation. This movement connects atmospheric conditions with oceans, lakes, rivers, soils, ecosystems and human communities.[4]

**3.2** The Commission further finds that clouds participate substantially in the Earth's energy budget. Clouds can reflect incoming solar radiation and can also absorb and influence the movement of thermal infrared radiation emitted by the Earth's surface. Their climatic significance therefore cannot be reduced to the production of precipitation or the obstruction of sunlight.[5]

**3.3** The Commission observes that international meteorological science already recognizes extraordinary diversity among clouds. The International Cloud Atlas identifies ten genera, with further distinctions according to species, varieties, supplementary features and associated classifications. The Commission considers this extensive classification system evidence that clouds have long warranted careful differentiation even where public language commonly treats them as a single undifferentiated category.[2]

**3.4** The Commission further finds that human activity is capable of modifying atmospheric conditions associated with clouds. The International Civil Aviation Organization identifies contrails and aviation-induced cirrus within its work concerning the non-CO2 climate effects of aviation and continues to assess operational opportunities for reducing those effects.[3]

**3.5** On the basis of these findings, the Commission determines that the characterization of clouds principally as scenery, weather, obstruction or navigational condition provides an incomplete account of their role within the systems through which human life itself is sustained.

ARTICLE 4

## Recognition of Atmospheric Participation

**4.1** The Commission hereby recognizes Atmospheric Participation as a foundational principle of its work.

**4.2** Participation, for the purposes of this Statement, shall not be contingent upon intention. A cloud need not choose to participate in the atmosphere in order to influence the movement of water, energy or precipitation within it.

**4.3** Participation shall likewise not depend upon permanence. Clouds form, transform, combine, separate and dissipate, and their temporary character does not diminish the physical consequences of their presence.

**4.4** The Commission rejects the proposition that meaningful participation requires economic productivity, fixed geographic residence, verbal communication or formal membership in a human institution. These requirements describe mechanisms through which human societies recognize one another; they do not establish universal prerequisites for participation in a planetary system.

**4.5** Accordingly, a cloud need not apply for recognition, establish permanent residence, demonstrate economic contribution or appoint a representative in order for its presence to warrant consideration.

**4.6** The Commission does not consider this recognition to confer legal personality upon clouds. It establishes instead the more limited proposition that human activity should acknowledge pre-existing participation before presuming exclusive entitlement to the environment in which that activity occurs.

ARTICLE 5

## Shared Airspace and Aviation Interaction

**5.1** The Commission recognizes aviation as an essential component of contemporary transportation and acknowledges its substantial contribution to mobility, trade, emergency response, scientific research and international connection.

**5.2** Recognition of these benefits does not require the atmosphere to be characterized as empty infrastructure.

**5.3** Commercial and other aircraft routinely enter atmospheric environments containing clouds. Aircraft may pass through existing clouds and, under appropriate meteorological conditions, may contribute to the formation of persistent contrails and aviation-induced cirrus. ICAO's ongoing work concerning non-CO2 aviation effects expressly includes contrails and aviation-induced cirrus as subjects of scientific and operational consideration.[3]

**5.4** The Commission therefore determines that human aviation does not merely operate above the Earth. It operates within an atmospheric system already occupied by physical processes and formations whose existence is independent of aviation.

**5.5** The Commission adopts the principle of Shared Airspace Responsibility and recommends that Aviation-Cloud Interactions be considered through evidence-based observation, transparent reporting and appropriate mitigation where scientifically supported.

**5.6** The Commission does not presume that every passage of an aircraft through a cloud constitutes measurable harm. It does, however, reject the assumption that the absence of established harm means that no interaction has occurred.

**5.7** For the purposes of Commission policy, transit does not negate participation. An aircraft that passes through an atmospheric environment has entered that environment, even where the duration of the interaction is brief.

ARTICLE 6

## Cloud Wellbeing

**6.1** The Commission adopts Cloud Wellbeing as an interdisciplinary analytical framework through which measurable conditions affecting clouds may be considered independently of immediate human utility.

**6.2** Cloud Wellbeing shall not be represented as a measurement of cloud happiness, distress, preference or subjective experience. The Commission presently possesses no evidentiary basis upon which to conclude that a cumulonimbus cloud experiences anxiety, that cirrus clouds possess preferences concerning aviation, or that stratocumulus formations require psychological intervention.

**6.3** The Commission nevertheless observes that cloud conditions are measurable and that anthropogenic activity can affect atmospheric systems. The absence of subjective experience, whether established or unknown, does not prevent scientific examination of physical conditions.

**6.4** The Commission therefore proposes that Cloud Wellbeing be assessed through observable indicators relevant to cloud formation and atmospheric interaction. Such indicators may include cloud occurrence, persistence, altitude, optical properties, precipitation, aerosol conditions, atmospheric temperature and humidity, and documented interactions associated with aviation or other anthropogenic influences.

**6.5** The Commission shall develop a proposed **Cloud Wellbeing Index (CWI)** through a separate technical process. Any such index shall identify its data sources, methodology, assumptions, limitations and uncertainties, and shall distinguish clearly between measured atmospheric variables and interpretive values assigned by the Commission.

**6.6** The purpose of the Cloud Wellbeing Index shall not be to manufacture scientific certainty where none exists. Its purpose shall be to investigate what atmospheric evidence reveals when the conditions affecting clouds are treated as an object of inquiry rather than solely as variables affecting human activity.

ARTICLE 7

## Atmospheric Consent

**7.1** The Commission recognizes that the concept of Atmospheric Consent presents substantial theoretical and methodological difficulties.

**7.2** Clouds are composed principally of suspended water droplets, ice crystals, or combinations thereof, and no accepted scientific evidence presently establishes that clouds possess the cognitive characteristics required to provide informed consent within the meaning ordinarily applied to human beings.

**7.3** Atmospheric Consent shall therefore not be interpreted as a claim that clouds possess a legally cognizable right to consent or refuse consent.

**7.4** The Commission instead uses Atmospheric Consent as a precautionary ethical framework for examining the assumptions made when one participant in an interaction possesses substantially greater capacity to initiate, regulate, document and interpret that interaction than another.

**7.5** The inability of an atmospheric participant to communicate an objection does not establish that no physical interaction has occurred, nor does it eliminate the responsibility of human institutions to examine the consequences of their own activity.

**7.6** Where direct consent cannot reasonably be obtained, the Commission recommends that human institutions favour careful observation, minimization of unnecessary interference, transparent reporting, evidence-based mitigation and continued research.

**7.7** The Commission acknowledges that meaningful consultation presents particular methodological challenges where one of the parties is composed predominantly of suspended water droplets or ice crystals. Methodological difficulty, however, shall not by itself constitute evidence of methodological irrelevance.

**7.8** The Commission accordingly adopts the principle that silence shall not automatically be interpreted as permission.

ARTICLE 8

## Evidence, Methodology and Transparency

**8.1** The credibility of the Commission's work shall depend upon maintaining a clear distinction among established scientific evidence, emerging scientific research, Commission-developed analytical frameworks and matters of ethical or policy interpretation.

**8.2** The Commission shall not alter established atmospheric science for the purpose of supporting its policy framework.

**8.3** Where scientific evidence is uncertain, contested or incomplete, Commission publications shall identify the relevant uncertainty rather than substitute institutional confidence for evidentiary support.

**8.4** The Commission recognizes the World Meteorological Organization's International Cloud Atlas as an authoritative international reference for cloud classification. The Atlas describes clouds as continuously evolving formations appearing in an infinite variety of forms while organizing characteristic formations through internationally standardized classifications.[2]

**8.5** The Commission further recognizes satellite observation, surface observation, aircraft measurement and atmospheric modelling as important sources of evidence concerning cloud occurrence, properties and interactions. NASA satellite products, for example, measure cloud fraction and contribute to scientific understanding of clouds within the Earth's climate and energy systems.[6]

**8.6** The Commission shall identify its own terminology as such. Concepts including Atmospheric Participation, Cloud Wellbeing and Atmospheric Consent shall not acquire scientific legitimacy merely through repetition in Commission documents.

**8.7** The Commission considers this limitation essential. An institution concerned with recognition must remain equally concerned with recognizing the limits of its own authority.

ARTICLE 9

## Recognition and Responsibility

**9.1** The Commission recognizes that clouds and the atmospheric processes supporting them do not conform to political boundaries. Cloud systems routinely develop, transform and move across municipalities, provinces, states, nations, oceans and other jurisdictions established for human governance.

**9.2** The transboundary character of the atmosphere creates a corresponding need for cooperation among scientific institutions, aviation authorities, governments, researchers, communities and other organizations whose activities affect or depend upon atmospheric conditions.

**9.3** The Commission therefore calls for an approach to atmospheric responsibility grounded in observation, evidence, proportionality, transparency and recognition of pre-existing Atmospheric Participation.

**9.4** Such recognition does not require the cessation of aviation, the attribution of human characteristics to clouds, or the negotiation of individual agreements with approaching cumulonimbus formations. It requires a more modest but consequential change in perspective: human activity should not presume that an environment is empty merely because its existing participants cannot attend the meeting at which decisions concerning that environment are made.

**9.5** The Commission further recognizes that institutional representation presents an unresolved challenge. The Commission shall therefore examine, through future consultation, appropriate methods by which the interests of atmospheric systems may be considered without falsely claiming to speak on behalf of entities incapable of appointing representatives.

**9.6** Until such methods are developed, the Commission shall treat scientific observation, transparent methodology and restraint in interpretation as the principal safeguards against unsupported representation.

**9.7** Recognition, in this framework, creates responsibility. Where human institutions possess the capacity to observe their effects, evaluate alternatives and reduce unnecessary disruption, the Commission considers the exercise of that capacity to be a reasonable component of responsible participation in a shared atmospheric system.

ARTICLE 10

## Adoption and Continuing Work

**10.1** By adoption of this Statement, the International Cloud Welfare Commission establishes Atmospheric Participation, Cloud Wellbeing, Shared Airspace Responsibility, Atmospheric Consent, evidentiary transparency, recognition and responsibility as foundational areas of Commission inquiry.

**10.2** The Commission shall undertake further work through policy briefs, technical papers, consultation papers, public statements and periodic assessments.

**10.3** The Commission's initial programme of work shall include the development of a technical methodology for the Cloud Wellbeing Index; examination of Aviation-Cloud Interaction and Shared Airspace Responsibility; consultation concerning the meaning and limitations of Atmospheric Consent; and preparation of the first **Global Cloud Wellbeing Report**.

**10.4** No future Commission publication shall treat a Commission-developed framework as established scientific fact merely because it has appeared in an earlier Commission publication. Each document shall remain responsible for identifying the evidentiary status of its principal claims.

**10.5** The Commission invites participation from atmospheric scientists, meteorologists, climatologists, aviation researchers, policymakers, educational institutions, artists, communities and members of the public, provided that such participation remains consistent with the Commission's commitment to evidence and transparent interpretation.

**10.6** The Commission acknowledges that humanity has traditionally asked what clouds indicate, provide, obstruct or mean for human activity. The Commission considers it useful to supplement that longstanding inquiry by examining the conditions under which human activity enters and modifies atmospheric systems that were already functioning before such activity began.

**10.7** The Commission accordingly affirms that the atmosphere shall not be understood solely as vacant infrastructure for transportation, observation, commerce or development. Human activities occur within pre-existing atmospheric systems whose functions, conditions and interactions warrant independent recognition and sustained study.

**10.8** The Commission further affirms that the presence of clouds within those systems constitutes a meaningful form of Atmospheric Participation irrespective of whether that participation is intentional, permanent, economically productive or capable of direct representation within human institutions.

**10.9** On that basis, the International Cloud Welfare Commission adopts the principle that **recognition of participation should precede the assumption of entitlement**.

**10.10** This Statement shall constitute the foundational public declaration of the International Cloud Welfare Commission and shall guide the development of subsequent Commission standards, consultations, research frameworks and publications.

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### FORMAL ADOPTION

Commission Statement 2026/01 was adopted by the International Cloud Welfare Commission on 10 September 2026 and enters the Commission record as its foundational public declaration.

Subsequent Commission publications may cite this Statement by publication code and Article number, including in the form: *pursuant to Article 4 of Commission Statement 2026/01*.

## The clouds were participating here first.

**INTERNATIONAL CLOUD WELFARE COMMISSION**
For Healthy Skies and Shared Tomorrows

REFERENCES

# Scientific and Institutional Sources

The following sources support factual statements contained in this Statement. Commission-developed terms and policy frameworks are identified within the Statement and should not be attributed to the organizations cited below.

**[1] NASA Earth Observatory.** *Cloudy Earth.* NASA reports that a study based on nearly a decade of satellite data estimated that approximately 67 percent of Earth's surface is typically covered by clouds. science.nasa.gov/earth/earth-observatory/cloudy-earth-85843/

**[2] World Meteorological Organization.** *International Cloud Atlas: Principles of Cloud Classification; Genera.* The WMO describes clouds as continuously evolving in an infinite variety of forms and recognizes ten main cloud genera, together with further classifications. cloudatlas.wmo.int/en/principles-of-cloud-classification.html and cloudatlas.wmo.int/en/principles-of-cloud-classification-genera.html

**[3] International Civil Aviation Organization.** *Non-CO2 Aviation Emissions.* ICAO identifies continuing scientific uncertainty in some non-CO2 aviation climate effects and describes work concerning contrails and aviation-induced cirrus, including operational opportunities for mitigation. icao.int/environmental-protection/non-co2-aviation-emissions

**[4] NASA Earth Observatory.** *The Water Cycle.* NASA describes the circulation of water among the surface, atmosphere and clouds, including evaporation, condensation and precipitation. science.nasa.gov/earth/earth-observatory/the-water-cycle/

**[5] NASA Earth Observatory.** *Climate and Earth's Energy Budget.* NASA describes the balance of incoming and outgoing energy and the role of clouds in reflection and thermal radiation. science.nasa.gov/earth/earth-observatory/climate-and-earths-energy-budget/

**[6] NASA Earth Observatory.** *Cloud Fraction.* NASA describes MODIS measurements of cloud fraction and the role of clouds in Earth's water cycle and energy budget. science.nasa.gov/earth/earth-observatory/global-maps/cloud-fraction/

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**Document note:** Scientific sources are cited for factual atmospheric and aviation claims. Terms including Atmospheric Participation, Cloud Wellbeing, Shared Airspace Responsibility and Atmospheric Consent are Commission-developed frameworks as expressly defined in Article 2.