1. The Role of ICAO in Regulating International Civil Aviation and Facilitating Air Transport

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is a United Nations specialized agency established by the 1944 Chicago Convention, currently bringing together 193 countries to develop and coordinate global aviation standards. Its core function is to create a harmonized regulatory framework for international civil aviation through the formulation of "Standards and Recommended Practices" (SARPs). These standards are distributed across 19 annexes to the Convention, covering key areas such as personnel licensing, aircraft airworthiness, flight operations, and aviation security, with over 12,000 standards currently in effect. Through this system, ICAO ensures that flights operating across national borders consistently meet baseline safety and efficiency requirements, thereby eliminating the risks to aviation safety posed by divergent national regulations.

In terms of facilitating air transport, ICAO's role is particularly evident in Annex 9 (Facilita tion). The annex is specifically designed to simplify and standardize border-crossing pr ocedures, including the processing of aircraft, passengers, crews, and cargo, thereby reducing unnecessary delays in international air travel. Additionally, ICAO promotes the modernization of global air navigation systems through global plans such as the "Global Air Navigation Plan," supporting seamless air traffic management and reducing fuel consumption and emissions. It is worth noting that ICAO's regulatory authority is primarily manifested through the consensus and voluntary implementation of its member states; ICAO itself does not possess supranational enforcement powers, and the formulation of its standards relies on a transparent, multi-stage consensus-building process that typically takes approximately two years. This model, while slower in decision-making, ensures broad acceptance and applicability of the standards.

2. The Role of IMO in Maritime Safety, Security, and Environmental Protection (with Particular Relevance to Cruise Tourism)

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is the United Nations specialized agency responsible for the safety and security of international shipping and the prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution from ships, and is the global standard-setting authority in this field. Its regulatory scope covers all aspects of ship design, construction, equipment, manning, operation, and disposal, achieved through core instruments such as the International Conventi on for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), and the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW).

In the context of cruise tourism, IMO regulations are directly applicable and of critical importance. Modern cruise ships can carry over 5,000 passengers and crew, making them akin to floating small cities. In terms of safety, SOLAS imposes strict requirements on the

structural fire protection and life-saving equipment of passenger ships, and following the C osta Concordia incident, it specifically strengthened provisions for passenger mustering and emergency training. In terms of environmental protection, MARPOL's Annexes IV (sewage) and V (garbage) set mandatory standards for cruise ship waste management, while Annex VI limits the sulfur content of fuel oil (reduced to 0.50% since 2020) and imposes energy efficiency requirements, directly affecting air quality in port and coastal areas. Furthermore, IMO's Polar Code provides additional safety and environmental protection for cruise operations in polar waters. Although IMO has yet to introduce binding international regulations on issues such as underwater noise from cruise ships, its voluntary guidelines are gradually filling these gaps. Overall, IMO ensures that the external costs of the rapidly growing cruise tourism industry—in terms of safety risks and environmental pollution—are controlled within an internationally acceptable framework.

3. The Influence of WTO on International Tourism Through Trade in Services and Related Agreements

The World Trade Organization (WTO) influences international tourism primarily through the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which for the first time incorporated tourism services into the multilateral trade regulatory framework. The GATS defines four modes of service supply, of which "consumption abroad" (Mode 2) is the most direct manifestation of international tourism: a consumer from one country purchases and consumes tourism services in the territory of another country, encompassing accommodation, dining, tour guide services, and more. This definition essentially transforms the cross-border movement of tourists into a legally recognizable trade activity, thereby subjecting the trade barriers and market access conditions faced by tourism services to WTO disciplines.

In terms of specific commitments, more than 133 WTO members have undertaken liberalization commitments in the tourism sector, a higher number than in any other service sector. This indicates that the vast majority of members view expanding tourism service trade as a means to attract foreign investment and promote employment. However, the depth of co mmitments varies significantly across sub-sectors: commitments in hotel and restaurant services are the most widespread, while relatively few members have made commitments in travel agencies, tour operators, and tour guide services, reflecting the sensitivity of many countries regarding the protection of their domestic tourism operators and employment. It is noteworthy that the GATS framework explicitly recognizes members' right to regulate for the purpose of achieving national policy objectives; liberalization commitments do not mean the elimination of regulation, but rather the enhancement of transparency and predictability in regulatory measures. For developing countries, the WTO framework also provides channels to seek technical assistance and special treatment, helping them enhance their capacity to participate in tourism service trade.