

# A Message from the Board of Editors: COVID-19 Special Edition of *Air & Space Law*

A new virus was identified in late 2019 in Wuhan, China, and rapidly spread throughout the world, aided by the mobility of persons that aviation makes possible. As at the beginning of July 2020, over 10 million cases had been identified worldwide, leading to death in some 500,000 cases.

This pernicious virus, named Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), has since been identified as a member of the coronavirus family, to which both the infamous Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) belong. COVID-19 is highly infectious, spread from person to person, with a calculated mortality rate of between 3%–4%. Due to these factors, as well as many medical facilities being overwhelmed with admissions related to COVID-19, the outbreak of the virus was escalated to a pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020.<sup>1</sup>

Aviation and space are fundamental global sectors that are being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic throughout their whole value chain. It is unclear how long the crisis will last and when the two sectors will, if at all, return to ‘normal’ pre-COVID-19 times. To combat the current challenges and ensure a swift recovery, clear and immediate actions are needed to protect the health of individuals; ensure the survival of these industries as a whole; allow stakeholders to contribute to the global fight against COVID-19; promote sustainable and equitable recovery; and prepare for a second wave or other future medical emergencies.

Numerous law and policy initiatives have been initiated at national, regional and global levels to combat the spread of the virus and mitigate its impact on aviation and space stakeholders with varying degrees of success. As a result, *Air &*

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<sup>1</sup> This is the crude mortality rate which is based on the number of reported deaths divided by the reported cases. It is, currently, too soon to provide a true mortality rate as the situation is still evolving and it depends, in large part depends on the access and quality of health care, and size and quality of testing. As a comparison, the seasonal influenza mortality rate is typically below 0.1%. World Health Organization, *Q&A on Coronaviruses (COVID-19)*, <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>.

*Space Law* has compiled several articles from world leading aviation and space law experts to produce this special edition devoted to the subject of COVID-19, with the aim of highlighting the key legal issues specific to aviation and space during this world crisis and providing guidance to those working in these sectors during these challenging days, whereby the world may be forever changed.

The Board of Editors would like to thank all the authors who have contributed to this special edition during these immensely testing times by providing thorough and thought-provoking articles on this rapidly evolving situation.<sup>2</sup> In addition, we would like to thank Dr Benjamyn I. Scott (member of the Board of Editors) for initiating and organising this edition and Mr Roberto Cassar (Managing Editor) for putting it together. Finally, we would like to extend our deepest sympathies to all those affected by this pandemic.

The Board of Editors

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<sup>2</sup> The articles in this edition try best to reflect the position as of 1 July 2020. While all efforts were taken to ensure accuracy at the time of writing, it is acknowledged that the situation is developing at a swift pace – whereby many discussions are either on-going or may not even have begun – and, in some cases, normal procedure has not been followed.