



**Remarks by the Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Dr. Fang Liu
to the launch ceremony Panel Session
for Brazil’s “Women in Aviation” Chapter**

(29 March 2017, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

Good morning ladies and gentlemen,

1. It’s my great pleasure to join you for today’s launch of Brazil’s *Women in Aviation* chapter, and to share a few of my insights as the first female Secretary General of ICAO.
2. I’d like to begin by personally congratulating all of the inspiring Brazilian women who have stepped up and taken a leadership role for gender equality through the launch of Brazil’s first *Women in Aviation* Chapter.
3. Through this Chapter, you will be serving as champions and advocates for change. You will be actively involved in raising awareness for women in aviation and how they contribute to aviation’s continued development, economic growth and sustainability. You will be reaching out to young girls – the future generation of aviation professionals – and opening their eyes and hearts to the many diverse career options available in our exciting and vibrant industry. I applaud all of you for taking on this very powerful and influential role.
4. Let’s be frank, it is not an easy task for women to succeed in any sector which historically has been predominantly male – as has been for the aviation sector. For women to even get into the industry in itself is a significant achievement. Furthermore, it is a tremendous challenge for a woman to advance to a senior technical or management role in air transport today, and that this is true in every world region, whether developing or developed.
5. Yes we must expect to work hard to achieve anything in life, whether personal or professional, just as men do, but as women we should also be able to expect in 2017 that: our efforts will be measured equally to those of our male counterparts; that we will be paid an equal amount for our equal work; and that we will be considered equally when chances to advance our careers may arise.
6. Unfortunately, however, this is still not the case.

7. Despite the fact that global air transport is presently faced with rapidly expanding flight volumes and an aging workforce of pilots, air traffic controllers, maintenance specialists and other technical professionals, women are still vastly under-represented in these professions.
8. One glaring example of this fact is that presently only 3% percent of commercial pilots globally are women. In various developed countries this percentage may climb to around 4-5%, but in the context of current global goals for 50% gender parity – across all professions and economic sectors – certainly much remains to be done in aviation.
9. At ICAO today, 30% of our professional posts are currently held by women. We and our aviation partners have intensified our gender efforts through collaborative initiatives, by ensuring that young women candidates are consistently represented in our annual Young Aviation Professionals Program, and more recently, at ICAO, by highlighting our dedicated women professionals on our careers website.
10. We are also working more closely with universities and other UN organizations to help more and more young girls and women, all over the world, gain access to academic opportunities in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines.
11. This year in fact, we're working closely with Captain Shaesta Waiz of the Dreams Soar campaign, an adventurous young woman hoping to advance STEM education access globally through her 2017 round the world flight.
12. Captain Shaesta will likely become the youngest woman ever to achieve that feat later this year, and ICAO is proud to be encouraging her at every turn.
13. ICAO's Member States have also instructed us to update and enhance our Gender Equality Programme, so that it can coordinate and lead sector-wide initiatives.
14. I take this as a helpful sign that attitudes are beginning to change, and I have made it my personal priority to support this work.
15. One priority in this regard is that more women have the opportunity to rise to leadership roles in aviation. The percentage of women serving as airline CEOs globally is currently fewer than 5% – similar to what we see for airline pilots.

16. These percentages are especially important to address when we appreciate how important leaders are as role models. They are also reflective of a global trend which was highlighted in the World Economic Forum's latest report on *Gender parity and human capital*, where it was stressed that significant hurdles persist for women seeking to rise to senior or board-level roles all across the global workplace.
17. There yet remain some very long and very meaningful strides to be taken toward recognizing the tremendous potential and contributions of women to our world, and to the modern workplace.
18. In taking those steps, we will not only be promoting moral justice and enhancing the personal dignity of millions of women and girls everywhere, but also adding some \$12 trillion dollars to global GDP according to a recent McKinsey Global Institute report. We can no longer afford to delay this process.
19. I for one will be helping aviation to live up to that potential, as I'm sure you will be as well.
20. What's most important is that we plan and work together toward this goal, and from that standpoint I find the launch of this new *Women in Aviation* chapter here in Brazil a very welcome, timely, and inspiring new development and I look forward to following your work.
21. I am confident that the actions taken by Brazil at this conference will inspire other Member States to also establish a *Women in Aviation* Chapter, if they have not yet done so. By adopting such pro-active initiative globally, meaningful strides will be possible for women in aviation around the world.

Thank you.