



**Lecture Remarks by the Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Dr. Fang Liu,
to the Uruguay Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Academy**

(Montevideo, Uruguay – 3 April 2017)

*Distinguished officials of the Uruguayan Government,
Friends and colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

1. It's a great pleasure for me to provide this lecture today, and to highlight for such a distinguished audience how instrumental international civil aviation has become to modern societies and economies.
2. Since ICAO was created under the Chicago Convention in 1944, its main objective has been to develop and amend international civil aviation Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPS) to harmonize the safe, secure, efficient and sustainable development of the international air transport network.
3. Today we have over 12,000 of these SARPs contained in the 19 Annexes to the Convention, which all ICAO Member States must comply with through their civil aviation rules and regulations. These ICAO provisions govern all areas of air transport, including such matters as safety, security, air navigation procedures, personnel licensing, airport development, aircraft airworthiness, accident investigation, and many other priorities.
4. ICAO's vision is to "*Achieve the sustainable growth of the global civil aviation system*", and the development and refinement of civil aviation SARPS is a continuous responsibility for us in that regard.
5. We constantly review and assess our planning and work programmes for SARP development under the guidance of the ICAO Council's current five Strategic Objectives for international air transport, namely: Aviation Safety; Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency; Security and Facilitation; the Economic Development of Air Transport; and Environmental Protection.

6. Recognizing the importance of ICAO's role, in 1999 we answered calls from Member States to launch the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP). This audits the eight Critical Elements required for effective implementation of a State aviation safety oversight capability.
7. Since the USOAP was launched, all 191 Member States have been audited by ICAO, and some more than once under its Continuous Monitoring Approach. USOAP monitoring and reporting mechanisms have also become invaluable to our efforts to identify local and regional challenges, and so to provide needed assistance and capacity-building where States need it most.
8. In more recent years this data has been supplemented by what we record in our annual Safety and Air Navigation reports.
9. In 2002 the Universal Security Audit Programme (USAP) was also approved by the ICAO Assembly. It has also evolved to a Continuous Monitoring Approach, and is seen as more important than ever today given the very dynamic and challenging air transport threat and risk context.
10. Both of these audit programmes are the best tools at our disposal for obtaining continuous data and analysis on Member States' aviation performance, including their level of effective implementation of SARPS, guidance material, associated procedures and related practices.
11. Building on these core responsibilities, and leveraging the privileged position they placed our Organization at the center of global air transport governance and progress, ICAO is now fully engaged, with our colleagues throughout the UN system, in working towards the historic *Agenda 2030* and the visionary Sustainable Development Goals, or 'SDGs', which comprise it.
12. Since the global Summit in 2015 which adopted the SDGs, an event I had the privilege to attend on behalf of ICAO and the air transport sector, our Organization has been working very hard to improve global awareness on how the availability of safe, secure, efficient, economically viable and environmentally sustainable air transport operations is fundamental to States' wider SDG objectives.
13. Indeed this promise of civil aviation has been clearly acknowledged since our global Convention was first established, by the 54 world powers which came together to draft it in the aftermath of the Second World War.
14. What they understood then, and what is just as true today, is that international air transport represents a tremendous instrument for the fostering of global peace and friendship.
15. In the decades since the Chicago Convention first enshrined this noble vision, civilian aircraft have brought together the world's peoples, languages, ideas, and values to a degree never before witnessed in human history. This is likely why Microsoft founder, Bill Gates, once referred to the airplane as humanity's "*first World Wide Web.*"

16. There is also, of course, a very important economic aspect to aviation's ability to connect the world. The global air transport sector today supports over 63.5 million jobs, while generating some 2.7 trillion dollars in global GDP.
17. Aircraft also carry over half of the 1.1 billion tourists who travel across international borders each year – a figure which rises to over 80 per cent for small island states who are so deeply reliant on tourism for their local prosperity.
18. Overall, aircraft carry more than 3.5 billion passengers each year, and transport some 35 per cent of world trade by value.
19. This helps to explain why air transport is essential to how suppliers and producers connect to global markets for perishable and other time-sensitive goods, and why I can have fresh cut flowers on my desk in Montreal each week, even in the middle of its very cold winters.
20. All of these combined impacts from international air operations lead to more robust and resilient local tax bases for governments, which in turn provide civic leaders with sustainable sources of capital for re-investment and long-term planning.
21. ICAO works tirelessly to ensure that countries and the public are aware of these impacts, with the goal of ensuring that States' national development plans factor in appropriate priorities and funding for aviation infrastructure and other needs.
22. But recently we have asked ourselves,

“What more can be done to aid this dynamic, and better ensure that all of ICAO's 191 Member States are fully able to realize the significant socio-economic benefits which are the true promise of modern air transport...”
23. It was in recognition and support of this challenge that we undertook two important and fairly recent objectives: our 'No Country Left Behind' initiative; and our new ICAO World Aviation Forums.
24. Our efforts under 'No Country Left Behind' recognize that, while air transport is essential to modern social and economic prosperity, and especially to the successful attainment of the UN SDGs, the effective implementation by States of ICAO's Standards and Polices is just as fundamental to their ability to participate in, and benefit from, aviation's remarkable global network.
25. 'No Country Left Behind' is therefore focused on providing or coordinating assistance and capacity-building for States, both developed and developing, and ensuring they have the skills and resources needed to be fully ICAO-compliant. ICAO helps them accomplish this through tailored Technical Assistance and a Technical Cooperation Programmes in States, activities which support local governments in implementing ICAO's global provisions and other air transport priorities.

26. These activities are already demonstrating concrete results. For example no fewer than four South American States have increased their ICAO Safety Audit scores by more than 15 per cent since 'No Country Left Behind' was initiated, and the overall South American average for the effective implementation of ICAO's safety oversight provisions now stands at over 76 percent – one of the highest rates in the world.
27. Uruguay has played a major role in this progress, having improved its own USOAP rating by no less than 30% in recent years while resolving all of its significant safety concerns.
28. Another important aspect of how successful States can be at addressing their implementation and infrastructure challenges, relates to the quality of their business case proposals, and the partners they find to work with.
29. This therefore leads me to the ICAO World Aviation Forums which I mentioned a moment ago, and which we first launched at the end of 2015.
30. The purpose of these events is to raise awareness of the wide-ranging socio-economic benefits of a well-supported civil aviation sector, provide practical business case advice to countries for their aviation development projects, and to foster improved collaboration among States, industry, other UN organizations, international development and business community partners, and of course, ICAO.
31. IWAF events also directly support the ICAO Council's priorities for ICAO to encourage Global Aviation Partnerships for Aviation Development (GPADs), whether relating to our Member States' responsibilities for effective standards implementation and sectoral oversight, or to their need to prioritize air transport infrastructure modernization.
32. It's important to remember and appreciate that all of these current activities and priorities are very much consistent with the vision for global aviation which guided the drafters of the *Convention on International Civil Aviation*, or '*Chicago Convention*' as it is more commonly known.
33. Article 44 of this historic document sets out the objective for ICAO to foster international civil aviation so as to ensure its safe and orderly growth throughout the world; to meet the needs of the world for safe, regular, efficient and economic air transport; and to ensure that every Contracting State has a fair opportunity to participate in aviation's benefits.
34. Similarly, its preamble sets out with clarity and a very prescient vision that international civil aviation was to be developed in a manner whereby it would help to create and preserve friendship and understanding among the nations and peoples of the world, and promote global security, peace and prosperity.
35. Since the Chicago Convention's establishment, few global agreements have been able to motivate States to respect the value and durability of consensus-driven collaboration in international affairs to a similar degree.

36. It has permitted the global air transport network to evolve and expand extensively and very peacefully over the last 70 years, into what can arguably be described today as humanity's most significant and complex example of successful international cooperation.
37. In the field of civil aviation, as with all other international activities, conflicts and disagreements are bound to occur among States. As diplomats and students of diplomacy, you will be aware that many of these conflicts and disagreements are typically resolved at the bilateral level, however on occasion they may also require the intervention of a third party.
38. In this connection, the Chicago Convention entrusts the ICAO Council with judicial and quasi-judicial functions.
39. By way of some brief background, the Council is the permanent governing body of ICAO, and it is currently composed of 36 elected Member States. Its mandatory functions include carrying out directions of the Assembly; establishing and working with the ICAO Air Navigation Commission; and appointing international officials such as myself to the position of ICAO Secretary General.
40. It also considers and adopts technical legislation in the form of Annexes to the Convention, and acts as a judicial body as I had just noted. For reference, Uruguay has been elected three times to the Council, once in 1998, a second time in 2007 and recently during the last Assembly in 2016.
41. As part of its judicial functions, Article 54(n) of the Chicago Convention stipulates that the Council "*shall consider any matter relating to the Convention which any Contracting States refer to it*".
42. While it is quite rare an occurrence, contracting States will at times make oral or written submissions to the Council regarding acts or omissions of other States, and request the intervention of Council to resolve the matter.
43. In such instances, the Council may, in its deliberations, express views, make statements, issue recommendations, or take decisions in the form of a Council Resolution, as may be appropriate.
44. Further, when there is a disagreement between two or more Contracting States relating to the Convention or one of its Annexes, a State may file an application to the Council under Article 84 of the Chicago Convention, requesting its assistance in settling the dispute. But because ICAO works very much on the basis of international consensus to begin with, these types of convention-related disputes are also very rare.
45. Another interesting diplomatic aspect of ICAO's work involves the development and adoption of international conventions or protocols.
46. Since ICAO came into being nearly seventy years ago, over forty international instruments have been adopted under the auspices of our Organization.

47. These international multilateral treaties cover a wide range of subjects in the field of international air law. For example, certain treaties address the issue of recognition of rights in aircraft, while others provide for rules relating to the international carriage of passengers, baggage and cargo performed by aircraft for reward. Other treaties relate to aviation security.
48. Taken together, these additional conventions and treaties help to establish a very robust international legal framework for global aviation.
49. Whether we are discussing the legal underpinnings for our sector, or its many priorities at present, ICAO's modern mission and role are more important now than ever before in light of the doubling of flight and passenger volumes now projected to take place by 2030.
50. This doubling means, in the simplest of terms, that the daily 10 million passengers and 100,000 flights now managed by our network will surpass 20 million passengers, on twice as many flights, in just the next 13 years.
51. But as ICAO continues to plan toward and manage this growth, in order to maintain or improve upon current levels of aviation safety and efficiency, we have also not lost sight of one of the key principles of effective leadership...
52. This principle reflects the fact that with every challenge, one is also presented with new opportunities.
53. In the *Agenda 2030* era, we must first look to identify those opportunities which are consistent with the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development.
54. Importantly, effective planning and action for sustainable growth must consistently acknowledge all three of these pillars together. None can be pursued at the expense of the others.
55. To foster growth in a sustainable manner, and towards solutions in aid of noble goals such as poverty eradication, gender equality, or the realization of inclusive, productive economies, government authorities must first establish coherent policies between aviation, tourism, and trade, as well of course as with other modes of transport.
56. Only through this manner of internal government coordination will aviation be able to optimize our global connections for cities, States and Regions, and effectively modernize and integrate social and transportation infrastructure.
57. Current estimates point to how these straightforward and often very low cost policy options could double aviation's global GDP contribution in the next 15 years, to some 5.4 trillion dollars.
58. But we must also acknowledge that, in an age of ever-tightening public budgets, aviation system modernization is not so straightforward a proposition.

59. Our sector must compete with governments which need to invest in a myriad of other social priorities, including health care, clean water, and many others, but it's my hope that some of my points today are helping you to realize that this process is by no means either/or and mutually exclusive.
60. Investments in aviation also support the attainment of these broader socio-economic goals, and its more important now than ever before that governments understand that dynamic.
61. Currently, however, only a very small percentage of annual global development financing supports aviation infrastructure or related projects. Less than 5% in fact.
62. I'm sure everyone here today would agree that this is absolutely insufficient if we wish to accommodate and manage future aviation growth, safely and efficiently, as well as optimize its benefits for citizens, businesses and societies.
63. ICAO has recognized that – without sufficient modernization – the expansion now projected in air transport threatens to overload the system. This presents the risk of significant and cascading negative impacts for economies large and small, and in every world region.
64. Besides our work on raising awareness in governments and fostering political will to address these challenges, ICAO has also begun refining and developing specific global strategic planning to lead the many players in the air transport sector toward shared objectives.
65. Our revised Global Aviation Safety Plan and Global Air Navigation Plan are complementary documents in this regard, setting out timelines, performance targets, and technology roadmaps.
66. These in turn give States, industry operators, avionics and aircraft manufacturers, and many more of our partners a new level of planning and investment certainty which is quite simply unprecedented in the history of air transport development.
67. The benefits of these global plans have been greatly appreciated by our Member States, and this was reflected in their endorsement at our 39th Assembly of a new Global Aviation Security Plan, as well as their agreement that we should begin exploring the value and potential of a more economic-focused Global Air Transport Plan.
68. Each of these documents, in addition to a more efficiency-oriented operating culture I have sought to instill as ICAO Secretary General, are helping us to realize more coordinated air transport progress and modernization, all over the world.
69. They have also provided a firmer and more energized foundation from which ICAO and the global aviation community can act rapidly on emerging challenges.

70. We saw good evidence of this in recent years, for example with our sector's rapid and very effective responses on flight tracking, and most recently with the landmark consensus we have forged at our Assembly last year on the new Carbon offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation.
71. This CORSIA agreement was a world first for any major international industry sector, and once again supported how our organization and the aviation community it serves can leverage our strong cooperative ties to drive real leadership on global issues.
72. On these and the many other specific areas of aviation progress we are engaged in, from cybersecurity to remotely-piloted aircraft, to the safe integration of sub-orbital flights, ICAO's overall commitment to keep the air transport network safe, secure and efficient, and at the service of all States and Regions, has not wavered.
73. We have challenging and comprehensive work programmes being pursued under our Strategic Objectives for Aviation Safety, Security and Facilitation, Capacity and Efficiency, Economic Development, and Environmental Protection, and in addition to the Global Priorities I mentioned earlier, namely 'No Country Left Behind' and the ICAO World Aviation Forums, we are also seeking to resolve global solutions to urgent needs such as Next Generation Aviation Professionals, more accessible Global Aviation Training, more accountable and effective Technical Cooperation and Assistance, Performance-based Navigation, Rapid Aviation Pandemic Response, and Gender Equality.
74. On this basis, I think you'll all agree that we have a bright but also very challenging future ahead of us in air transport, and it will be my pleasure now to discuss some of these topics further with you in the Question and Answer session which has been arranged for us.
75. Thank you.