



**Remarks by the Secretary General  
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)  
Dr. Fang Liu,  
to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) General Assembly  
Plenary 1 - General Debate – First Segment**

*(Chengdu, 13 September 2017)*

*Excellencies,*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

1. It is a pleasure to be here with you today at this twenty-second World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) General Assembly here in Chengdu. I would first like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to our host, the Government of the People's Republic of China, for extending such a warm welcome and providing these excellent facilities.
2. I also wish to express ICAO's gratitude to the UNWTO for their partnership and cooperation over the years, which ICAO has greatly valued.
3. Some 1.2 billion tourists are travelling across international borders each year, and over half of these are arriving at their destinations in commercial aircraft.
4. Air transport connectivity is therefore a very key component of tourism development, with lower costs and expanding route networks greatly increasing the number of destinations which tourists can consider visiting.
5. We should also not lose sight of how important these trends are to our colleagues from least developed, landlocked, and small island developing States. The recent raising-up of Cabo Verde, The Maldives and Samoa from Least Developed status was clearly driven by their strong tourism growth.
6. ICAO and the UNWTO have been highlighting this very symbiotic relationship between tourism and aviation development since the last World Tourism General Assembly, in 2015. Indeed it was

detailed at that time in the “*Medellín Statement on Tourism and Air Transport for Development*” adopted at a joint UNWTO/ICAO High-level Forum.

7. In this Statement, amongst many other benefits and positive impacts, we recognized the pivotal roles which tourism and air transport play in expanding employment; raising incomes and tax bases; bridging the gaps between developed and developing countries; and fostering sustainable prosperity.
8. We also encouraged governments to more closely weigh the benefits of tourism and air transport investment on an equal basis with other development options. States could benefit tremendously by coordinating their aviation development planning in their national development plans, and by streamlining their traveller border security and facilitation processes through updated and coordinated ICAO-compliant approaches.
9. Taken together, these objectives form a blueprint for establishing a critical foundation of global connectivity in aid of State’s achievement objectives, whether in support of the UN SDGs and *Agenda 2030* or other local priorities.
10. With respect to the need for regulatory refinement and convergence, liberalized or open skies policies – including the related guidance produced by ICAO – have greatly aided air transport and tourism growth in the past two decades in line with our long-term vision for air transport liberalization.
11. Another important issue in this area regards the need to closely align the main aviation and tourism policies in States. Separate approaches, with conflicting targets, too often leads to damaging disconnects to the detriment of both sectors.
12. Another priority in the regulatory domain regards air travel accessibility and notably the need to accommodate persons with disabilities. ICAO encourages governments to pursue these objectives through holistic approaches and ‘smart travel’ principles.
13. This requires data-sharing between government agencies to support improved security risk assessments, and also improved border control and identification management efficiencies, for example as outlined under the ICAO Traveller Identification Programme (TRIP) strategy.

14. And in terms of separate road and rail, or what we refer to as ‘multi-modal’ transport alignment challenges, the strategic solutions needed must integrate all sustainable transport planning efforts with the need for balanced development.
15. This leads me to some points on China’s current Belt and Road initiative, but before we explore these, and in light of where we are meeting today, let me also take a moment to appreciate China’s current tourism performance as this may be helpful to your coming discussions.
16. China continues to lead on global outbound travel, with double-digit growth in tourism expenditures every year since 2004.
17. Spending by Chinese travellers increased by no less than 26 per cent in 2015, reaching 292 billion dollars, and its total number of outbound travellers rose by 10 per cent to 128 million.
18. These growth trends are also being clearly reflected in the air transport sector, where China is now the largest domestic market in the Asia-Pacific. It presently accounts for almost 60 per cent of all domestic flights in the region.
19. To place these figures in a global context, in 2016 travel and tourism supported a total of 292.2 million jobs and contributed 10.2 per cent to world GDP, which equates to 7.6 trillion dollars. Tourism-related GDP is projected to grow by 4.0 per cent annually over the next decade, compared to 2.7 per cent for general GDP growth.
20. Aviation is nothing short of vital to Asia-Pacific economic development, and this trend will only continue as today’s 2.2 billion air travellers here more than double, to over 5 billion, in just the next two decades.
21. This highlights for us the importance of establishing greater regional cooperation, integration and connectivity, and China’s ‘Belt and Road’ initiative will likely be a god-send to this healthy dynamic of partnership and sustainable prosperity.
22. Belt and Road could well become the world’s largest ever platform for regional collaboration and transnational connectivity, and this in turn could lead to very positive contributions to not only the regional but also the global economy.

23. The transportation focus of 'Belt and Road' over the past several years has focused mainly on maritime and rail links, but if we wish to optimize its impacts we must also bring air transport development priorities to the forefront.
24. This leads us now to *Agenda 2030* and its Sustainable Development Goals, and to the very fundamental role played by aviation connectivity in the SDGs' realization.
25. We have gone to some effort in ICAO to map out the specific aviation contributions to the SDGs, and I would encourage you to review those linkages on ICAO's website.
26. To raise awareness on this critical dynamic of aviation investment and sustainable socio-economic returns, ICAO works very closely with the UNWTO and many other partners.
27. At events such as ICAO's World Aviation Forums (IWAFs), we help governments to better understand how effective ICAO compliance establishes the key foundation permitting increased local operations, ultimately leading to new revenue streams and planning potential for their Ministries.
28. The next IWAF will be held this November, in Abuja, Nigeria, and will be the very first conducted in an ICAO Region. This will be an essential event for any State on any continent which may presently be seeking to define and attract investment to a well-structured aviation development project.
29. Accountability is a key component of this process, and ICAO addresses that in part through our role as the custodial agency for SDG 9.1, which sees us monitoring cross-border transport infrastructure development.
30. Ultimately, we must all recall that Travel & Tourism's contributions to world GDP outpaced the global economy for the sixth consecutive year in 2016, and that our sectors now jointly support fully one out every 10 jobs worldwide.
31. With some of the world's leading travel and tourism authorities taking part in this General Assembly, it is my hope that our voices will become even stronger and more unified on the priorities now before us, and that we can work as one to the benefit of economies and civil societies everywhere.

32. But to do so we also need committed government partners who will prioritize aviation development needs in their national development strategies, who will seek convergence and compatibility in their consumer and tourist protection regimes, and who will seek effective integration between their air transport and other service and commodity sectors.
33. Improvements in airport infrastructure and air navigation systems, in safety and security oversight capabilities, and in the liberalization of air transport services are all key measures to be pursued by LDC, LLDC and SID States if their goal is to break the vicious circle of economic and logistical disadvantage.
34. ICAO remains your very committed and enthusiastic partner in these efforts, and we will look forward to working you on them along our shared journey to *Agenda 2030*.
35. Thank you.