



ICAO

**Opening remarks by the  
Secretary General of ICAO  
Dr. Fang Liu,  
to the Fourth Meeting of  
Directors General of Civil Aviation  
for the ICAO Middle East Region (DGCA-MID/4)**

*(Muscat, Oman, 17 October 2017)*

1. It is my pleasure to join you here for this Fourth Meeting of Directors General of Civil Aviation of the ICAO Middle East Region.
2. Please let me begin by expressing ICAO's sincere thanks to the government of Oman, and to Dr. Mohamed Al Zaaby and his team for the organization, very warm welcome, and excellent facilities we've been provided with for our meeting here today.
3. I would also like to highlight the incredible appreciation which ICAO has for the many States we work so closely with in the MID Region.
4. Yours has been the fastest growing region for passenger and cargo traffic since 2011, and airlines here have posted double-digit passenger flight growth every year since 2012.
5. In 2016, MID air carriers recorded 11.2 per cent growth in revenue passenger-kilometres (RPKs), the highest among all ICAO regions, and your Region presently accounts for 10 per cent of global passenger traffic.
6. These types of results underscore the importance of the strong and active commitment which the States of this region have established to work together through ICAO, and especially with respect to the priorities for assistance and capacity-building established under our No Country Left Behind (NCLB) initiative.
7. In this regard, I would congratulate both your States and ICAO's Regional Office leadership and staff on the development of the MID Region NCLB Strategy. It will be presented to this meeting for

endorsement, and aims to establish a new leadership approach based on specific and measurable outcomes, and greater and better-defined areas of accountability.

8. This leads us to the main goals for this 4th DGCA meeting, which focus directly on aviation development and the regional collaboration so essential to its success.
9. Aviation, after all, is a major engine of economic growth for States and a significant driver of increased tourism and trade. More than half of international tourism and nearly a third of global trade by value are dependent on air transport connectivity, and aviation presently supports more than 2.4 million jobs and 157 billion dollars in MID Region GDP.
10. For governments, the most important point to keep in mind when considering how to optimize aviation's benefits is that investors, both private and public, will be more eager to work with States which have a stable regulatory framework.
11. They will also want to assess projects where their return on investment is clearly outlined.
12. These qualities above all will help you to ensure a more reliable flow of capital for your aviation development objectives.
13. Your cooperative work under the MID Region NCLB strategy will help to identify and overcome a number of regional challenges, including among others the shortages of qualified aviation professionals to operate and manage your network through the coming decades.
14. Fortunately, this is not a challenge you must face alone.
15. ICAO is hard at work assisting you today through our Next Generation Aviation Professionals (NGAP) programme and Global Aviation Training (GAT) Office, and we continue to seek greater support for these initiatives.
16. Simply stated, growth is more of a risk than a benefit to the air transport sector if we do not ensure sufficient numbers of skilled professionals to continuously assess and manage our projected growth.

17. The role of enthusiastic and well-trained young professionals will be critical to our performance under all of ICAO's Strategic Objectives for international aviation, and it will be my pleasure now to briefly review some current priorities with you under each of these.
18. Beginning with aviation safety, we can all be very proud that 2016 was the safest year ever for international air transport. Only 2.1 accidents were registered for every million departures, a 25 per cent improvement over 2015.
19. As global safety performance continues to improve, aided importantly by our cooperative efforts under the *ICAO Global Aviation Safety Plan* (GASP), we have begun to focus greater attention on some specific challenges such as addressing operational risk under the State Safety Programme (SSP) and Safety management System (SMS) framework, the effectiveness of Regional Safety Oversight Organizations (RSOOs), and many other priority targets.
20. In this regard, the RASG-MID has identified priorities which have helped all stakeholders to work towards the agreed safety targets contained in the *MID Region Safety Strategy* and *Doha Declaration*.
21. The Region is also expected to establish the MENA RSOO, hosted by Saudi Arabia, in order to assist its member States in their SSP development and implementation, as well as to provide assistance to improve States' safety oversight capabilities.
22. It is also worthwhile to highlight that ICAO, through its Regional Offices, has taken a much more proactive stance on assisting States in resolving their Significant Safety Concerns (SSCs). Currently, the MID Region has no SSCs and you should all take some pride in this accomplishment.
23. Where both Aviation Safety and Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency are concerned, continuous increases in traffic volumes are making our goal of maximized operations increasingly complex.
24. In this regard please let me take a moment to commend the spirit of cooperation and respect for safety prioritization in air transport, as exemplified by the rapid addressing of several ATM operational challenges through the MID Contingency Coordination Teams (CCTs) and ATM Contingency Plan.

25. The establishment of the MID Flight Procedures Programme (MID FPP) will further support States in meeting their obligations relating to flight procedure design, and this will eventually bring benefits to the implementation of Performance-based Navigation (PBN), a global priority for ICAO today.
26. Many of these and other forward-looking topics will be discussed at ICAO's back-to-back Global Air Navigation Industry Symposium (GANIS/2) and Safety and Air Navigation Implementation Symposium (SANIS/1) this December, as well as at our 13th Air Navigation Conference in 2018.
27. In terms of our shared environmental challenges, we should be quite proud of the significant developments which have recently been achieved.
28. This includes the new Aircraft CO<sub>2</sub> Standard which the ICAO Council adopted this past March, and the historic Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation, or *CORSIA*, which was adopted at our Assembly last October.
29. 2017 has also been a very big year for Sustainable Alternative Fuels, work which culminated in a new vision statement agreed by States and industry at ICAO's High-level Conference on Aviation Alternative Fuels just last week. This will henceforth encourage governments and industry to scale up their development and deployment of these fuels, from a variety of feedstocks, and with due respect in all circumstances to any related sustainability concerns.
30. With respect to aviation security, I have a number of important updates to bring to your attention today.
31. Late last month I provided a comprehensive aviation security briefing to the UN Security Council on behalf of ICAO, and its Member States were in full agreement that civil aviation remains an attractive target for terrorists.
32. They also recognized that international cooperation must be further enhanced to strengthen air transport security, under the framework provided by ICAO and the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention).
33. This very prominent UN body further assured its full political support and high appreciation subsequent to our updates on the imminent finalization of the ICAO Global Aviation Security Plan

(GASeP), and recognizing the importance of information-sharing, more resources, and improved cooperation in support of our related capacity-building and technical assistance.

34. As I highlighted to the Security Council, the GASeP, will be a pivotal document and the primary tool by which the aviation security community aligns and coordinates its efforts while fulfilling its diverse roles.
35. Its roadmap for implementation will be carried out over the next three years, and your regional input and cooperation will be critical to that success.
36. In this respect, I would like to congratulate you on the establishment of your Middle East Regional Aviation Security and Facilitation Group (MID-RASFG), and the development of a Draft ACAC/MID SECFAL Plan, to effectively address the priorities outlined in the Riyadh Declaration of 2016.
37. Please let me also appreciate the leadership and support of Saudi Arabia in the work and results which led to the Riyadh Declaration's development and adoption.
38. Another local development of tremendous value to our work has been the newly-endorsed Africa and Middle East Aviation Security Roadmap.
39. ICAO was grateful for Egypt's leadership and commitment in that regard, both with respect to the Regional Ministerial Conference it conducted in Sharm el Sheikh where this Roadmap was formalized, as well as for the fact that this document will now greatly aid us in assuring the achievement of the GASeP's objectives in your States.
40. On the security regulatory front, provisions to Annex 17 have now been strengthened. Amendment 15 includes more detailed provisions on risk assessments, cybersecurity, landside security, and other priorities.
41. We have also started working on Amendment 16, which enhances our standards for security risk assessments and data sharing, incident reporting, screening methods, the air cargo supply chain, and cyber preparedness.

42. Portable Electronic Devices are another area requiring ICAO's attention, and related recommendations from our Task Force on Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and Multidisciplinary Cargo Safety Group (CSG/2) are now being reviewed by the ICAO Council.
43. Emerging issues which ICAO is taking into account today mainly concern the increasing use of unmanned aircraft systems and drones, in addition to the integration of sub-orbital and commercial space flights.
44. During our 39th Assembly last October, our States requested us to expand the scope of our work and develop a baseline for global harmonization of all types of unmanned aircraft operations, including in domestic airspace.
45. By engaging this work, beginning with our *DroneEnable* event that was held last month, ICAO was focused on bringing value to States through improved regulatory guidance and value to manufacturers through new common baselines.
46. On the commercial and sub-orbital flight side, ICAO and the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) have worked over the past two years with an expert group to identify several pressing issues.
47. Our present goal is to establish a timeline for the development of related provisions in the 2019 revisions of the GASP and the GANP.
48. Moving now to Economic Development, I would like to reaffirm our commitment to assist our Member States in optimizing the significant socio-economic benefits of aviation.
49. We are working today to ensure that you have the tools and capacities you need to assure the first and most fundamental requirement in this regard: effective compliance with ICAO's global standards.
50. This ICAO compliance serves as the key foundation for the global connectivity which only air transport can deliver, and which subsequently supports States' attainment of no less than 15 of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals under *Agenda 2030*.

51. Ever since I took office as Secretary General, tremendous efforts have been made to advocate for sustainable aviation development within States, and to raise awareness on how aviation connectivity can be so indispensable to many of your local sustainability objectives.
52. Together, we can better advocate for States' Official Development Assistance (ODA) contributions, and to help countries appreciate the priority for including aviation development objectives in their overall national development plans.
53. Later this year, in November, all of these topics will be on the table when we conduct our third ICAO World Aviation Forum – the very first to be taking place in an ICAO Region. It will be held this year in Abuja, Nigeria, and we greatly encourage your high-level participation as the discussions will relate to all ICAO States and regions.
54. As one last point regarding ICAO compliance, I would further encourage your States to continue strengthening the resources available to your civil aviation authorities (CAAs).
55. It is essential that these agencies have appropriate financial and management autonomy, as well as the ability to attract, recruit and retain qualified technical personnel.
56. In closing now, please let me remind you that regional meetings such as this one, and the others that ICAO convenes, are critical to our shared progress and success.
57. Your active participation remains essential to these results, and for our part ICAO has been making great strides in becoming more focused and efficient in our service to you.
58. On that note, please let me wish you all a very productive meeting.
59. Thank You.