



**Address by the Secretary General of
the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Dr. Fang Liu,
to the Women Heads of Diplomatic Mission of Ottawa**

“Role of Women in the Decision-Making Processes”

(Ottawa, 13 February 2018)

1. It is my honour to be here with you today.
2. Gender equality, and the role of women in the decision-making process, are priorities I feel very strongly about.
3. Before joining ICAO it was my pleasure to serve the Civil Aviation of Administration of China for over twenty (20) years, first as a legal counsel and later in the field of international affairs.
4. In all of these capacities, and certainly with respect to my current role as ICAO Secretary General, competency has been a paramount factor in terms of achieving recognition and advancement.
5. But in addition to our competencies, women must also recognize the almost daily challenges posed to our self-confidence and our determination.
6. Any woman with skill and ambition must be prepared to confront and overcome these obstacles in the course of their careers.
7. While at the World Economic Forum in Davos last month, it was instructive to see the role of women being debated.
8. Participants weighed the importance of gender diversity in their cabinets, boardrooms, and management teams, and certainly the same priorities are now confronting the aviation sector.

9. Current statistics reveal that fewer than seven per cent of the aviation workforce is female, and at the CEO level that drops to less than five per cent.
10. We have a saying in China that “women hold up half the sky”, but in air transport today this is definitely not the case.
11. Air transport presently moves over 4.1 billion passengers each year, on more than 37 million flights, and in doing so it fosters a great deal of sustainable economic growth all over the world.
12. But these flight and passenger volumes are now forecast to double in just 15 years’ time, and without sufficient skilled professionals to fill the new roles which emerge, the safety, security and viability of the aviation system may be called into jeopardy.
13. This helps to explain my profound dedication to removing barriers to women’s participation in air transport, and to prioritizing their professional development opportunities.
14. Part of the solution is to encourage girls to choose Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) subjects from an early age, so that they do not overlook the significant opportunities awaiting them in aviation’s technical fields.
15. ICAO undertakes this globally through our Next Generation of Aviation Professionals (NGAP) programme, as well as through the professional growth opportunities and scholarships we provide.
16. ICAO’s Member States have also strongly reaffirmed their related commitments by directing ICAO to initiate a sector-wide Gender Equality Programme.
17. This effort will importantly complement the worldwide efforts to address gender equality through the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which was adopted at the United Nations in 2015.
18. As Secretary General of the only Specialized Agency of the United Nations headquartered in Canada, let me please stress that ICAO is passionately committed to supporting States in their efforts to achieve *Agenda 2030* and all of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, or ‘SDGs’.

19. But one which I hold personally near and dear is the specific SDG target respective of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. I also support UN Secretary-General António Guterres's "System-wide strategy on gender parity" launched in mid-September 2017. Indeed, achieving gender parity is an urgent priority, not only as a basic human right, but also as it is essential to the United Nations' efficiency, impact and credibility.
20. As women in decision-making, we are meeting here today because of our unique positions at a pivotal time in the history of gender equality.
21. I am deeply honoured to be able to share my thoughts and experiences on this topic with such an illustrious cross-section of accomplished professionals.
22. I have been grateful for your attention and your enthusiasm in helping women everywhere to achieve and to prosper, and to find their fulfilment in a much more welcoming, respectful and appreciative world.
23. Thank you.