



**Address by the Secretary General
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Dr. Fang Liu
to the Grand Opening of the inaugural
Global Aviation Gender Summit**

(Cape Town, South Africa, 8-10 August 2018)

1. As a woman who has spent virtually her entire career in the service of international civil aviation, this is truly an exciting moment for me to witness this first-ever Global Aviation Gender Summit.
 2. I would first of all like to congratulate the Honourable Minister of Transport for South Africa, Dr. Bonginkosi Emmanuel Nzimade, and the Director General of the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA), Ms. Poppy Khoza, for jointly supporting ICAO's hosting of this inaugural Summit in the beautiful city of Cape Town.
 3. All of the support and excellent facilities you have provided for us are highly appreciated.
 4. We should also recognize together, that through its hosting of this Summit, South Africa has now positioned itself as a true frontrunner on gender.
 5. Your State has very clearly and concretely demonstrated its firm commitment to the advancement of women in aviation through this support, and for that we all salute you.
 6. I was also deeply appreciative that SACAA and ICAO have enjoyed such close collaboration in organizing this Summit from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), not to mention the technical guidance we received from our colleagues at UN Women.
 7. And let me please not leave out my good friend Ms. Angela Gittens, the Director General of Airports Council International (ACI), who is an inspiring woman herself, and who has also devoted some of ACI's resources toward helping make this first summit a great success.
-

8. The result of all of these efforts is therefore a truly collaborative effort, and as the first female Secretary General of ICAO, and an avid supporter and champion of women in aviation, I greatly look forward to what we can achieve here.
 9. For those of you who may not be aware of the sheer scope and significance of the world's air transport network, our sector today supports the employment of no fewer than 62.7 million people worldwide, and generates 2.7 trillion dollars each year in global gross domestic product (GDP).
 10. Modern commercial aircraft move over 4.1 billion people and transport over a third of world freight by value on 37 million flights each year, and this is in addition to the business aviation, adventure tourism, medical and emergency services, search and rescue, and other important social, logistical, and economic contributions which aircraft provide to civil societies every day around the world.
 11. The global connectivity achieved via those 37 million plus annual flights our network manages explains in part how international civil aviation is such a key enabler of socio-economic progress and international development.
 12. Another important factor in that dynamic is due to air transport being such a forward-looking industry – one which acts as an early adopter for new technologies and which constantly stimulates development, innovation and entrepreneurship.
 13. Aviation already contributes greatly to peace, prosperity and sustainable development, all over the world. Yet, aviation can do even more for our society, and especially for women.
 14. In order to accomplish this, it must first become a better example of gender equality in action.
 15. We must address head-on why women are still underrepresented in the majority of the technical and executive positions in aviation.
 16. And we must acknowledge that while the current imbalance may be a challenge to those of us already serving as professionals in this sector, it can be an opportunity for the next generations of girls now completing their studies and entering the workforce.
-

17. These young people, so full of hope and promise, are making important decisions today about the careers they will pursue.
 18. This helps to explain why, in 2016, the ICAO Assembly reaffirmed its commitment to the promotion of women in aviation by calling for an ICAO Gender Equality Programme.
 19. We are fortunate in a sense that the challenge of gender equality is far from unique to air transport.
 20. This explains in part why the “Time is Now” slogan rings so true for the entire world, and across all sectors.
 21. This commonality of our challenge brings us tremendous opportunities to build synergies between our agencies and sectors: by working across them; by sharing success stories; and by supporting each other through joint initiatives and partnerships.
 22. We are seeing this in action here today.
 23. Normally, for instance, our ICAO meetings are attended almost exclusively by representatives from the aviation sector and closely related international partners.
 24. For this Global Aviation Gender Summit, however, we have also seen sizable interest and representation from the scientific, education, labour, and research sectors.
 25. All of these perspectives will help to inform and enrich the issues we explore together, leading ultimately to conclusions and recommendations for a practical way forward.
 26. This Summit should therefore be seen as a key opportunity to explore the challenges and enablers to women’s advancement across a variety of technical and scientific disciplines.
 27. We will also expect it to mobilize the global air transport community, a highly specialized sector, in identifying concrete actions to accelerate gender equality in aviation.
 28. This includes identifying the partnerships we need to establish to support the effective coordination of these actions.
-

29. During this summit, senior Government officials and aviation industry representatives will kick-start this process through a series of panel discussions.
 30. We will also have an educational session on gender equality, through the lens of ‘unconscious bias’, with the aim of raising awareness and understanding on how it can adversely impact individual and organizational decision-making.
 31. Tips and guidance will then be provided on how to evolve attitudes of ‘unconscious bias’ toward postures of ‘conscious inclusion’.
 32. The outcomes of these sessions will then serve as the foundation for our dialogue and reflection during the remainder of the programme, where more specific gender equality barriers and enablers relating to culture, education, and the workplace will be explored.
 33. In a sense we are aiming to change the gender equality narrative at this Summit by analyzing it through both behavioural and socio-economic lenses.
 34. We expect to reach a common understanding here on what gender equality in aviation entails, and the benefits it can bring, with special focus on the importance of diversity, inclusiveness, and the positive impacts expected in terms of organizational effectiveness and success.
 35. Our work must also align with and support the global efforts underway in achieving the *2030 Sustainable Development Agenda*, and in particular, *SDG5 on Gender*.
 36. And we especially must not lose sight of the key role to be played in all of these efforts by reliable, disaggregated data on gender, whether for trend analysis, workforce planning, or related needs.
 37. The barriers and enablers we will be identifying throughout this process should be looked upon as both challenges and opportunities for the enhancement of gender equality in aviation.
 38. This includes those which relate to workplace culture, access to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) or aviation educations, and leadership and mentoring programmes.
-

39. It's critical to our longer-term success that our agreed approaches seek to advocate for gender equality in aviation among both governments and private sector air transport operators, and in each case the need for strong commitments and leadership, at the highest levels, must be consistently underscored.
 40. We must also clearly identify and discuss how to break down the existing barriers to gender equality in aviation, for both existing and new women professionals, whether through shared best practices, specific new programmes and initiatives, or any other means which are practical and achievable.
 41. Last, but certainly not least, we must aim to "engender aviation" through a concrete roadmap which will accelerate progress in enhancing the participation and representation of women in the global aviation community.
 42. This is a lot of work to be done in a short two-and-a-half day period, to be sure, but I am fully convinced that all of it can be achieved.
 43. On that note, ladies and gentlemen, I will wish you all a very productive and engaging Summit.
 44. Thank you.
-