



**Opening Remarks
by the Secretary General
of the International Civil Aviation Organization,
Dr. Fang Liu,
to the ICAO Asia and Pacific (APAC) Region
Public Health Experts' Roundtable on:**

The Future of Aviation: Facing the New Normal with COVID-19

(Virtual meeting presentation, 3 November 2020, 23:00h)

1. Good morning everyone.
2. I wish to express my deep appreciation to Director Mishra and the ICAO APAC Office for convening this important and timely expert discussion.
3. I would also like to thank the States which have sponsored their Public Health and Civil Aviation experts to join us here today, and also those participants representing other aviation and public health stakeholders in the APAC region.
4. COVID-19 has now infected over 43 million people globally, and led to over 1.2 million fatalities.
5. It has wreaked havoc on local and global air connectivity, and on the many countries and operators who once made that connectivity possible.
6. These aviation impacts have imperiled businesses large and small, and the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people worldwide.
7. And we must also recognize that they are being felt very acutely by the 14 Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) in this region.
8. From a global standpoint they have been significantly more severe than any previous downturn in the international movement of people and goods, and their very dire effects on airport and airline financial viability could yet mean that we emerge with a far less connected world post-pandemic.

9. Here in the Asia and Pacific Region, ICAO has monitored air operator revenue losses of close to 100 billion dollars due to COVID-19.
10. This is the largest such loss ever recorded here, but we can also be encouraged by the fact that ICAO traffic data is revealing that regions which feature higher levels of intra-regional traffic will recover more quickly.
11. Yours is one such region, with various States here being commended for their pandemic response success, and it's important that government and industry decision makers continue to build upon these excellent APAC results.
12. The success of these efforts is already becoming evident in the resurgence in domestic traffic now taking place, and in the higher levels of passenger confidence being seen compared to the early days of COVID 19.
13. I would encourage your continued proactive pursuit of Public Health Corridor and other near-term travel bubble solutions, as these can increase public confidence in air travel even further.
14. Singapore for example has implemented special travel arrangements with Brunei Darussalam, China, Japan, New Zealand, and Malaysia, and has an agreement in principle on a two-way, quarantine-free bubble with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.
15. I've also been encouraged by related coordination between Australia and New Zealand, between China and Republic of Korea, and by the trials which have begun between Singapore and the United Kingdom.
16. Today's meeting represents another important step in the closer ICAO and WHO COVID-19 collaboration being established here in the APAC Region, building upon the successful joint webinar our Bangkok Office hosted on 5 October.
17. At the global level ICAO and the WHO collaborate most closely in this area through the ICAO Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation, or CAPSCA, which we established after the SARs outbreak in 2003.

18. CAPSCA coordination is currently supporting extensive multi-sectoral collaboration on public health-related measures.
19. It is directly assisting with the design and implementation of the Take-off recovery guidance issued by the ICAO Council's Aviation Recovery Task Force, or CART.
20. And it has also established a collaborative Validation Partners process between industry and governments, relating to Public Health Corridors.
21. IATA and ACI are the first of our external Validation Partners to have completed this process to date, with ACI having issued the first validation certificate.
22. A last point I wish to make on the topic of Public Health Corridors concerns the ICAO State Letter we published in September.
23. It provides extensive information to States on how to establish these corridors, and important advice for countries on how to promote the mutual recognition of public health measures through multilateral agreements.
24. Regarding the CART guidelines I mentioned a moment ago, these are currently aligning national pandemic response and recovery measures in air transport country-to-country, as medical circumstances permit.
25. The Task Force is now completing the *Phase II* of this guidance, and public health authorities should take particular note of its new recommendations relating to general hygiene, masks and face coverings, health screening and declarations, air passengers with reduced mobility, and the mental health and well-being of aviation workers and passengers.
26. Specific attention has also been aimed at helping countries assess testing options as a means to alleviate quarantine measures, and as medical factors permit, augment the international movement of people and goods.

27. This *Phase II* guidance is expected to be endorsed by the ICAO Council on 9 November, and countries are urged to follow it to align their measures, while upholding each State's prerogative to implement additional and/or alternative mitigation measures in accordance with their specific needs and circumstances.
28. Looking ahead, aviation will be relying on public health authorities to help determine a prudent balance between testing and quarantine approaches, and to make use of the *ICAO Manual on Testing and Cross Border Risk Management Measures* when doing so.
29. We all recognize that public health and safety are the paramount factor in any effort to restart international travel, and this makes it incumbent on aviation authorities to work in close coordination with their health counterparts to address and mitigate related risks.
30. We must also be ready to be able to effectively move vaccines around the world by air when the time comes, even despite all of the challenges now being confronted by air operators.
31. There is still a great deal ahead of us in terms of turning the corner on COVID-19, but with improved cooperation, I am confident that we can build back better in aviation post-pandemic, and achieve a more sustainable future for international air connectivity.
32. From this unique initiative, I hope that some concrete suggestions will emerge to benefit the rest of the world as they too confront the challenges of effective cooperation between Health and Civil aviation authorities for the common good of all States and their citizens.
33. I wish all of you a very productive session today and will look forward to reviewing the outcomes.
34. Thank you.