



**Statement by the Secretary General
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)**

**Dr. Fang Liu,
to the African Aviation Recovery Conference**

*“Coordinating efficient response to the COVID-19 crisis effects
on the aviation sector in Africa”*

(Virtual presentation, 3 December 2020)

1. It’s an honour to address this very timely and important meeting at the invitation of the African Development Bank.
2. Prior to the pandemic’s outbreak, Africa’s air transport market was poised to become one of the fastest growing in the world.
3. Aviation development benefits were connecting African countries, peoples, suppliers, producers, and markets, to an unprecedented extent, and increased international tourism and economic growth were driving sustainable prosperity improvements, continent-wide.
4. But since the onset of COVID-19 of course, that has all changed.
5. As is being seen all over the world, the pandemic precautions and restrictions being enforced have shut down passenger travel to barely one-fifth normal levels.
6. Freight traffic has been more resilient, in light of our societies’ continuing reliance on the food products, medical supplies, and other perishable goods and emergency services which can only be carried by air.

7. The air cargo sector is also enabling and benefitting from the surge in e-commerce activity being seen worldwide, but overall ICAO is still recording drops in freight traffic of around 20% compared to 2019.
8. Taken together, these effects are making it harder and harder for airlines and airports to survive, never mind turn a profit.
9. These risks in turn place seven million African aviation jobs, and the over 72 billion dollars in continental GDP air transport generated last year, in serious peril.
10. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ICAO has therefore taken a series of proactive and very urgent steps, including:
 - The development of COVID-19 Safety Operational Measures to support continued operations during the initial stages of the pandemic;
 - The establishment of a COVID-19 Recovery Platform to collate the forecasts, guidance, tools, and resources that are needed by national regulators and other stakeholders to respond to this global crisis;
 - And the development of guidance material in close collaboration of the WHO, UNWTO, industry, and other important regional and global partners, to help countries respond more effectively while aligning their respective mitigation measures.
11. This guidance, which was prepared and formalized through our ICAO Council's Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART), is being continuously monitored in terms of its effective implementation.
12. A few weeks ago it was updated with new 'Phase II' recommendations, one of which stipulates that, where medically prudent, countries should consider and evaluate COVID-19 medical tests for passengers using the new *Testing and Cross-border Risk Management Measures Manual* ICAO has just issued.

13. We were greatly encouraged that our pandemic guidance was endorsed and adopted as quickly as it was by the African Union Commission's (AUC) High Level Task Force on the Restart and Recovery of Aviation in Africa.
14. This is a clear indication of the effective coordination existing between ICAO, the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), and the AUC, and we are seeing similar benefits as ICAO's Global Implementation Roadmap (GIR) helps individual countries in managing their local responsibilities.
15. With regard to the Roadmap's recommendations on financial measures, funding requirements in the short, medium and long-term are highlighted.
16. And with the very comprehensive recovery process set out requiring even further coordination and resources not earlier anticipated, ICAO has reached out in a recent State letter urging new in-kind or other State contributions through the ICAO Resource Mobilization Fund (RMF).
17. The 7.5 million dollars we need to raise will help address some critical gaps currently arising in:
 - a) the establishment of national aviation plans for communicable disease outbreaks;
 - b) the development and deployment of resources and assistance;
 - c) the critical ongoing work through the Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA) framework;
 - d) and the urgent new standards needed to better address future pandemic events.
18. Concerning Public Health aviation-related measures, I would like to encourage African States' exploration and establishment of Public Health Corridors and other near-term travel bubble solutions.
19. Our COVID-19 portal provides extensive information on establishment of these corridors, and on the mutual recognition of public health measures through bilateral and multilateral agreements.

20. In concluding now, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to recall how in recent years African countries were making significant progress toward achievement of the *Agenda 2030* Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and how aviation was playing such an important part in that success.
21. This dynamic was highlighting not only the value of international connectivity, but also of the multilateral organizations and collaboration which permits those connections to happen in the first place.
22. That very same multilateral approach is critical to our joint efforts now to coordinate our responses and measures and get the world back on its feet once COVID-19 is behind us.
23. I wish to therefore emphasize the excellent collaboration and cooperation between ICAO and the AUC and AFCAC, towards the enhancement of aviation system performance in Africa and the operationalization of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM).
24. ICAO and AFCAC are helping to accelerate the SAATM momentum with a new project agreement which will be formalized shortly, and this will provide targeted and measurable assistance to applicable States.
25. I also wish to applaud the close collaboration ICAO has enjoyed over the years with African development partners such as NEPAD, the Economic Commission for Africa, the World Bank Africa office, and our hosts today at the African Development Bank.
26. All of us have an important role to play, both in helping aviation to recover, and to help it become a more pandemic-resilient and sustainable sector for future generations.
27. And we cannot lose sight of how important innovation will be to that future, both in terms of our own ways of working together, and the many exciting technological developments now taking place in Artificial Intelligence, blockchain, and autonomous, unmanned sub-orbital, and supersonic air transport.
28. These activities should remind us that we are ushering in an entirely new era in powered flight even as we confront this dire threat to our traditional operations.

29. They also reminds us that people love to fly, and to be flown, and that long after the pandemic is behind us aircraft will continue to connect us, and our world.
30. Thank you, and I look forward to very productive discussions here today.