



**SG Speech notes:**

**UNWTO Global Tourism Crisis  
Committee and Commission for the Middle  
East  
Thursday, 8 April 2021**

1. I wish to begin today by expressing my appreciation to our hosts from Saudi Arabia.
2. I also wish to acknowledge the extensive synergies which unite the global air transport and tourism communities, and the excellent cooperation which has been established between ICAO and the UNWTO.
3. The latest ICAO Economic Impact Analysis of COVID-19 on Civil Aviation reveals that we're back to 2003 levels in terms of global seat capacity.
4. Here in the Middle East, passenger totals dropped by over 70% and recovery in general is proceeding more slowly than in some other areas of the world, mainly due to the high levels of international passenger movements here.
5. More generally, the precipitous decline in air traffic all over the world continues to present severe liquidity strains to companies and suppliers throughout the air transport and tourism value chains.
6. It's expected that we'll encounter further challenges as air travel begins its return to normal post-pandemic, and the ICAO Council's Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) has identified three key areas requiring our focused coordination.
7. The first is the establishment of national and regional risk management strategies to gradually open air routes based on mutually recognized public health measures.

8. Success here will heavily rely on national decision-makers taking fuller account of air transport's role as an enabler and multiplier of economic recovery, and ICAO continues to raise awareness on this point.
9. The second area of CART priority concerns the possibly profound long-term implications for traditional air transport business models and operations post pandemic.
10. Industry structure, market demand, and customer expectations will all be impacted, and each of these in turn could lead to new approaches to operations, network and fleet management, and product design and pricing.
11. Given that over 50% of cross-border travelers formerly arrived by air pre-pandemic, the implications for tourism markets in light of these significant evolutions in air transport could be profound.
12. A further area of this CART priority concerns how aviation is undergoing a vast digital transformation, and that this will only accelerate as we seek to address passenger health screening challenges and globally-interoperable digital health credentials.
13. The third key area the CART has identified concerns the priority for us to learn together from COVID-19 to improve overall air transport crisis preparedness, enhance economic and environmental sustainability, and enable smarter operations.
14. To help countries explore these and other priorities, ICAO will be convening a High-Level Conference on COVID-19 this coming October.
15. We'd encourage highest level involvement of the travel and tourism community at this event, and I'd suggest that our messages and recommendations for the decision makers at this event should be as clear and as strong as possible.

16. Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to conclude today by offering some reassurance that when the vaccines have done their work, and the shadow of COVID-19 has lifted, people everywhere will take to the skies again to explore, to learn, and to trade.
17. As transport and tourism leaders, we must anticipate and deliver what passengers and tourists will expect from the new normal in terms of healthier and more sustainable international mobility.
18. We must also ensure the industry can emerge from the pandemic more economically viable and resilient, and I'm as encouraged by our solidarity as we confront this challenge, as I am convinced of our capability to rise up and meet it.
19. Thank you.