



**Opening Address
by the Secretary General
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Dr. Fang Liu
to the Grand Opening of
the 2021 AFI Aviation Week**

(Virtual meeting, 15-16 July 2021)

1. It's an honour for me to once again participate in the opening of this year's AFI Aviation Week.
2. Over the next two days you'll attend a series of important events focused on the implementation of ICAO's Strategic Objectives here in Africa, most notably concerning the ICAO AFI Plan and AFI SECFAL plan.
3. It's our expectation that these virtual sessions will provide you with excellent opportunities to take account of current progress being achieved in enhancing African aviation performance, and also to appreciate the tremendous gains which have been made collaboratively to cope with the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 global pandemic.
4. Over the years, and largely on the basis of your AFI Plan coordination, Africa became the world's fastest improving region in terms of the Effective Implementation (EI) of the critical elements of States' safety oversight systems. Furthermore, many support activities were provided or initiated through the AFI Plan Work Programme in 2020 and 2021, even in the wake of the significant COVID-19 challenges.
5. The assistance provided by ICAO Regional Office Safety Teams (ROST) through the AFI Plan coupled with the generous AFI Plan partner support provided to various States, played a big part in achieving this result, thus contributing to the improvement of overall safety confidence and performance in the AFI region, and dramatic decrease in the number Significant Safety Concerns (SSCs) from seven in 2015 to one in the AFI Region.

6. In accordance with the 2017 Ezulwini Ministerial Declaration on Regional Safety Oversight Organizations (RSOO) in Africa, and subsequent guidance by the AFI Plan Steering Committee on the development of a Strategic Plan for supporting and strengthening Regional Safety Oversight Organizations (RSOOs) in Africa, a consultant has now been engaged to conduct a comprehensive RSOO study on the subject matter.
7. The outcomes of the study will be presented to the AFI Plan Steering Committee for consideration at its next meeting, and ICAO will expect some concrete RSOO outcomes subsequent to your assessment of that analysis.
8. Progress with respect to the implementation of other current AFI Plan projects, covering aerodrome certification, Search and Rescue (SAR) coordination, State Safety Programme (SSP) establishment, and a number of other priorities, will be reported to you later today during this AFI Plan meeting.
9. Despite the safety improvements being seen, we must also recognize that the AFI Region's EI average is still below the global average, and that it continues to fall short of the 60% EI target set by the Abuja Declaration (2012).
10. This should impress upon all of us the importance of maintaining current momentum on the AFI Plan work programme as approved by the Steering Committee.
11. With the recent approval by the ICAO Council of the continuation of the AFI Plan until 2024, the Steering Committee Programme Document has been accordingly updated, and will be presented for review and approval at its 24th Meeting.
12. Aviation Security and Facilitation is another area where we're seeing continuing improvement and effective coordination under the AFI SECFAL Plan, in particular with respect to ongoing virtual support to State-specific projects, the conduct of limited scope USAP CMA audits, the promotion of ICAO's *Year of Security Culture* (YOSC) workshops, and the delivery of AVSEC iPacks.
13. Similar results have been seen in the Facilitation area with delivery of FAL iPacks, the Annex 9-FAL course, as well as coordination of the regional API/PNR seminars.

14. I have also allocated additional funding, in the amount of 553,000 Canadian dollars, to support the implementation of four additional COVID-19 response and recovery activities under the AFI SECFAL Plan.
15. Air transport performance in Africa declined by 58% in 2020 compared to 2019, with 78 million fewer passengers flying here last year.
16. Yet even though air transport growth rates in Africa were among the fastest in the world prior to COVID-19, we must also recognize together that recent results could have been much more robust if not for persisting regulatory barriers, financial constraints, and the slow pace of air transport liberalization here.
17. In view of this, and in collaboration with the AUC, RECs, AFCAC, ECA, and other relevant stakeholders, ICAO is assisting States in more effectively addressing our existing policies and guidance on the economic regulation of international air transport.
18. A high degree of priority has been assigned to the implementation of Assembly Resolution A40-9 – the *Consolidated statement of continuing ICAO policies in the air transport field*, as well as to the relevant outcomes of the Sixth ICAO Air Transport Conference, and related seminars and workshops are currently addressing matters related to taxation, airport and air navigation services economics, and aviation data and statistics.
19. In order for ICAO economic policies and guidance to be suitably customized to the African context, we must first ensure due alignment among the Lomé Declaration on air cargo development in Africa, the Antananarivo Declaration on sustainable air transport development in Africa, and the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) as outlined in the Yamoussoukro Decision (YD).
20. The implementation of the two Declarations is currently being monitored by ICAO through State Air Transport Action Plans (SATAPs), as well as via the activities being conducted by your countries in accordance with ICAO CART Recommendation 10.

21. In conclusion now, and notably as this will likely be my last opportunity to address AFI Aviation week as ICAO Secretary General, I wish to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude one last time for the partnership and support of African States throughout these past six years.
22. It was a significant priority of mine to empower ICAO's Regional Offices when I took office as Secretary General, and it has been encouraging to see how they have made such good use of their expanded roles and capacities to your countries' ultimate benefit, under the leadership of their Regional Directors.
23. I would like to thank you all for your steadfast commitments to the development of civil aviation in Africa, and for the continuous progress you have achieved in recent years, and on that note I declare these extraordinary AFI Aviation Week events for 2021 officially opened.
24. Thank you.