



**Opening address by the President of the ICAO Council,  
Dr. Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu,  
to the ICAO Regional Air Transport Conference**

*(Montego Bay, Jamaica – 7 October 2014)*

It is a pleasure and a great honour for me to address this air transport conference for the North American, Central American, Caribbean and South American Regions and to meet with all of you in the beautiful city of Montego Bay.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Jamaican Civil Aviation Authority for hosting this event, for providing such excellent meeting facilities, and for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to us. My heartfelt appreciation extends to the Jamaican Government for its generous support of this timely and, I trust, engaging meeting. Permit me also to acknowledge the excellent work of the Air Transport Bureau and the ICAO Regional Offices in Mexico and Lima leading up to this event.

Our objective for the conference is to provide a forum for government policy makers, air transport regulators, the industry and other aviation stakeholders to review the latest trends and developments, discuss common challenges, and explore practical, effective and collaborative solutions.

We in aviation have a long tradition of dialogue and open-mindedness. Since the first commercial flight over one hundred years ago, air transport has thrived on the free-flow of information and constructive cooperation. Today, it is by far the world's safest and most efficient mode of mass transportation and a powerful engine of economic and social development everywhere.

From Canada to Chile, aviation supports more than 13 million jobs and approximately 160 billion dollars in gross domestic product. For landlocked countries and island States especially, it represents an essential lifeline that connects them to regional and global markets for travel and tourism, and for the movement of goods and other vital business activities.

A major reason for our success is that we have continuously embraced challenges as opportunities to learn, to innovate and to serve. With this in mind, I would like to set the stage for your deliberations by outlining some of the major challenges we currently face, as well as some of the solutions we may wish to consider over the next three days.

First, I believe, we must streamline the global regulatory framework. There are more than 4,000 air services agreements today that dictate the rules and practices for air travel between countries. This confusing and inefficient patchwork of regulatory arrangements impedes orderly growth. Ineffective competition rules and widely differing passenger rights legislations are two of the more high profile issues that we must definitely resolve.

Another formidable challenge is airspace and airport congestion – a serious threat to safety and efficiency in many parts of the world. Airport and air navigation infrastructure have not kept pace everywhere with the rapid increase in aircraft movements, not to mention the projected doubling of traffic worldwide over the next 20 years.

Then there is the uneven level of aviation development in the world. A number of developing States lack the technical, management and financial resources required to ensure the expansion and viability of their air transport systems.

And there is also before us the proliferation of taxes and duties on aviation operations, all of which bring about a negative long-term impact on both operators' and States' bottom lines.

Many of these shortfalls are tied to the lack of required funding and financing for such essential elements of a sound air transport system as regulatory oversight, infrastructure development, enhanced air navigation systems and procedures, and human resources.

These challenges are not new to us. Some of you deal with them every day and all of us are committed to overcoming them as we have always done – together – as a vibrant and unified community.

In this spirit of deep-rooted collaboration, ICAO has positioned itself to fully support you and other Member States in the realization of a globally-sustainable air transport system. One that benefits passengers and businesses, here and around the world.

A fundamental step in that direction was the decision to add the new Strategic Objective for the 2014-2016 triennium focused on the *Economic Development of Air Transport*. This new objective aims to expand and strengthen the role of ICAO in the air transport field in order to promote a sound and viable international air transport system.

It is also an Objective which is totally aligned with the outcomes of the ICAO Sixth Worldwide Air Transport Conference, which was held in March 2013 and that many of you attended, I am sure. You may recall that it produced a comprehensive package of recommendations that was subsequently endorsed by the 38th Session of the Assembly, and which is designed to guide our collective efforts for this decade and beyond.

Along those lines, let me highlight some of the ICAO initiatives, past and present, that flow from or support those recommendations:

- With the assistance of the Air Transport Regulation Panel, the ICAO Secretariat has developed a long-term vision for international air transport liberalization, one that could serve as a reference point for Member States in their pursuit of its benefits.
- Also with the assistance of the Air Transport Regulation Panel, we are currently preparing a template international agreement to guide States in liberalizing both market access and air carrier ownership and control. We are furthermore taking the lead in formulating a similar template agreement for the liberalization of air cargo services.
- As for policy guidance regarding consumer protection, we have developed a set of core principles that can inspire both States and other interested stakeholders.

- A very successful initiative undertaken a few years ago to facilitate liberalization is the annual ICAO Air Services Negotiation Conference, now known as the “ICAN event”. This unique venue allows aviation negotiators from States to conduct multiple air service negotiations at a single location, thereby greatly improving the efficiency of the process. Jamaica was the host of ICAN2010, and ICAN2014 will be convened in Bali, Indonesia from 17 to 21 November. I strongly encourage you to attend.
- ICAO has also been taking a more proactive approach in reaching out to industry, aviation stakeholders and international organizations to create a more favourable environment for the development of air transport.
- Another accomplishment has been the establishment of a multi-disciplinary working group to explore solutions or measures concerning the funding and financing of regulatory government oversight functions, aviation infrastructure development, and implementation of the ICAO aviation system block upgrades, or ASBUs.
- Finally, concerning the proliferation of taxes, I want to emphasize that this is clearly at odds with ICAO policies. I would like to see a greater exchange of information on this critical question and a better application of the ICAO policies on taxation in the air transport field.

I hope that these remarks provide useful food for thought for your deliberations and for the drafting of the declaration the conference intends to adopt.

In closing, let me mention that ICAO will celebrate, this coming 7 December, the 70th Anniversary of the signing of the *Convention on International Civil Aviation*. Throughout this period, cooperation among Member States and with the industry has brought together billions of people in friendship, promoting peace and understanding throughout the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you a very successful conference and I look forward to meeting many of you over the coming days.