



**Opening Address by the President of the ICAO Council,
Dr. Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu,
to the ICAO Global Aviation Cooperation Symposium (GACS)**

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It is indeed a great pleasure for me to welcome you to this first-ever ICAO Global Aviation Cooperation Symposium.

We are united here around a single purpose, to help build together the air transport system of the future. But before we look ahead, allow me to take us back to where it all began.

Seventy years ago, on 7 December 1944, the *Convention on International Civil Aviation* was signed. That historic document created ICAO and gave its wings to what we today call the global air transport industry.

The guiding principle of the Chicago Convention was, and to this day remains:

“...that international civil aviation may be developed in a safe and orderly manner and that international air transport services may be established on the basis of equality of opportunity and operated soundly and economically”.

As we look at the progress we have made since then, we might be tempted to proudly say – mission accomplished!

We have, perhaps beyond the most optimistic dreams of our forefathers, succeeded in establishing a global air transport system which is, both profoundly and consistently, reshaping for the better the world in which we live.

In many ways, air transport is the essence, the mirror of our global society. It is a formidable driver of economic, social, cultural and political development worldwide. It brings together family and friends. It makes it possible for business people to ‘seal a deal’ with a handshake. Diplomats can move quickly from nation to nation, sitting at the same tables and brokering peace. Heads of State can meet in major summits to solve world issues. Often, humanitarian aid can only get to disaster victims by air.

And because of aviation, you and I can attend meetings like this one to plan how air travel can be even safer, more secure and sustainable, on the basis of our mutual collaboration.

Our goal over the coming days is to foster even greater cooperation for shaping the future of international civil aviation, in terms of innovation, growth and technical cooperation.

The greatest catalyst for this priority is by far the rate of growth of air transport. By 2030, the number of passengers will double to 6 billion and the number of departures to 60 million worldwide, with a corresponding increase in the number of new aircraft to fuel that growth. There will be a need for new or upgraded infrastructure, more efficient air navigation systems, additional professionals in all categories, and adjustments in regulations and policies.

From ICAO's perspective, we all need to maintain a vigilant eye on our five new Strategic Objectives approved by the ICAO Assembly last fall so as to ensure a safe and efficient global air transport system, for everyone, everywhere across the planet.

Our first priority, as always, is to enhance safety and reduce aircraft accidents in every part of the world.

We also need to work with States and partner organizations to efficiently manage the increasing congestion in the skies and at airports, particularly in high-density regions where capacity is at or nearing the saturation point.

As with safety, the security of passengers and crews, as well as persons on the ground, must be our priority. And, as news headlines keep reminding us, the threat of terrorism and other acts of unlawful interference is a reality we continue to live with.

We must also guide and assist the liberalization of industry while ensuring a balance between security and facilitation.

And finally, we will keep innovating to reduce our environmental footprint, through a basket of measures, aspirational targets, and even more energy-efficient aircraft that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and noise at airports.

Our mission as an Organization flows from this vision. While we remain the global forum for States and the international civil aviation community, we are committed, together with our global partners, to assist Member States in responding to the rapidly evolving technological, regulatory and economic developments brought about by the quickening pace of growth and globalization.

As part of our mission, I wish to emphasize three specific and interrelated roles.

One is to ensure that Standards and Recommended Practices, or SARPs, contained in our 19 Annexes are up to date and truly reflect the current operating environment, in its broadest sense.

Our second role is to keep adapting our Audit Programmes to current conditions under the Continuous Monitoring Approach, and in the spirit of transparency and disclosure.

This brings me to our third role which is to assist States in the implementation and monitoring of SARPs. This is perhaps the most challenging and complex one, but also perhaps the most important one. I firmly believe that the full and consistent implementation of SARPs is a *sine qua non* condition for improving all aspects of a safe, secure and sustainable aviation system. As we develop new SARPs, we must ensure that corresponding policies, guidance and capacity-building assistance are readily available for their effective implementation.

Globally-harmonized implementation of Standards enables us to maintain air transport as the safest and most efficient means of transportation available to the citizens and businesses of our 191 Member States.

In my travels around the world, States continue to ask for assistance in the implementation of SARPs, including training and capacity building. And this is basically what this Cooperation Symposium is all about.

The Technical Cooperation Bureau of ICAO has prepared a challenging agenda for you in this regard, one conducive to sharing best practices, building relationships, and exchanging views on ways and means of cooperating to enhance all parts of the global air transport system.

No country should be left behind. From now on, let this be our motto – as what occurs in one part of the globe can have an impact half a world away, and often with dramatic consequences. Every travelling passenger should feel safe and secure and be provided with reliable and efficient transportation no matter his or her destination.

And so, as we reflect on new ways and means of enhancing global cooperation over the next two days, let us be inspired by another guiding principle of the Chicago Convention: namely, that the future development of international civil aviation will serve to create and preserve even greater friendship amongst the many nations and peoples of the world.

On that note, I wish you all a very productive Symposium.