



ICAO Secretary General highlights future aviation challenges at Conference of Montréal event

For immediate release

Montréal, 14 June 2019 – ICAO Secretary General Dr. Fang Liu underscored a range of civil aviation priorities relating to economic growth and innovation as she introduced and took part in a high-level panel discussion on the future of air transport at the Conférence de Montréal.

Conducted under the auspices of the International Economic Forum of the Americas, the Montréal event featured wide-ranging government and industry VIP participation and covered a series of key issues relating to international finance, development, trade, and other policy topics of global relevance.

In her introductory remarks to the conference session on “The 75th Anniversary of ICAO: What Future For Civil Aviation”, Dr. Liu stressed that “for many countries, and especially those we refer to in the United Nations as ‘Landlocked and Small Island Developing States’, air transport connectivity serves as a critical economic lifeline and plays a very important role in supporting countries’ efforts to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted under the UN’s Agenda 2030.”

Recognizing that it’s a key current priority for ICAO to help governments appreciate the links between their aviation investments, compliance to global standards, and sustainable local economic growth, she went on to explore what this will mean in the years ahead as the air transport sector jointly confronts the “veritable revolution now underway in terms of what powered flight will mean to 21st century civil societies.”

“By this I mean not only the millions of smaller drones being used for an almost endless variety of purposes around the world today, but also many other aircraft types,” Dr. Liu explained. “At one end of this spectrum we’ll see autonomously controlled aircraft navigating residential and urban environments to taxi us to local destinations and deliver goods. And at the other, sub-orbital planes will be moving at super- or hyper-sonic speeds, right alongside sub-orbital and commercial space transport flights.”

The ICAO Secretary General noted that these new model aircraft will not only be transporting people and goods – but also providing services which are entirely new aviation deliverables such as internet access, emergency logistics, and many other capabilities not yet dreamed of. She highlighted that ICAO “sees this revolution more as an evolution”, and that “as standards setter ICAO must nurture innovation in all its forms, but also safeguard the basic interoperability among nations which has made air transport such an incredible force for peace, prosperity and economic growth on a truly worldwide basis.”

Dr. Liu emphasized that aviation’s key drivers for change which are guiding the sector’s response to the challenges of future aviation include the doubling of global flight volumes projected during the 2030s, the sheer complexity and diversity of the new commercial space and remotely-piloted entrants needing to be integrated in our skies alongside conventional air services, and the pervasive and evolving cyber threats which confront all major 21st century industries and companies.

“ICAO itself has faced malware and other attacks of this nature, as I’m sure many in this room have in one form or another, but in terms of safeguarding the day-to-day transit of tens of millions of people across a truly global network, the aviation sector and world governments are already hard at

work on assuring and maintaining a robust and responsive cybersecurity framework.”

Drawing her audience and panel members’ attention to the skilled personnel shortages air transport faces, even as it seeks to address these challenges, Dr. Liu made it clear that “achieving greater gender equality sector-wide, whether for pilots or other skills-based or managerial roles, will be critical to addressing our skilled personnel challenges.”

She concluded by taking note of how blockchain distributed ledgers and various types of AI applications are already finding important niche roles in making aviation more efficient and secure, and that “the potential inherent in these new technologies is virtually limitless for a system as complex and time-sensitive as aviation is today.”



ICAO Secretary General Dr. Fang Liu underscored a range of civil aviation priorities relating to economic growth and innovation yesterday, as she introduced and took part in a high-level panel discussion on the future of air transport at the Conférence de Montréal on 11 June 2019.

Resources for Editors

About ICAO

A specialized agency of the United Nations, ICAO was created in 1944 to promote the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation throughout the world. It sets standards and regulations necessary for aviation safety, security, efficiency, capacity and environmental protection, amongst many other priorities. The Organization serves as the forum for cooperation in all fields of civil aviation among its 193 Member States.

[Aviation Security and Facilitation, a strategic objective for ICAO](#)
[ICAO's No Country Left Behind initiative](#)

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