



ICAO Secretary General highlights importance of ICAO pandemic role, responses, to industry routes event

For immediate release

Montréal, 1 December 2020 – While delivering opening remarks to this year’s ‘Routes Reconnected’ virtual industry event focused on sectoral recovery, ICAO Secretary General Dr. Fang Liu underscored how the UN agency has been continuously stressing the pandemic’s threats to the basic sustainability of international flight, keeping related concerns “at the forefront of government and UN system consideration.”

“We know that airlines are still facing dramatically reduced flights and load factors, and that a resurgence of COVID-19 is now taking place across much of the northern hemisphere,” she said. “We know airlines cannot service routes, and keep the world connected, by managing flights without the passengers who make them financially viable. And with our ICAO forecasts now estimating a 60% reduction in 2020 passenger totals, we know that these threats to your financial viability pose cascading risks for civil societies in many areas of socio-economic and sustainable development.”

Dr. Liu emphasized that a world not connected by scheduled flights is “a world where countries will face serious challenges to their short- and long-term needs for fresh fruits and vegetables, vaccines and medical supplies, and many other perishable and high-value goods.”

She also stressed aviation’s current role in the global growth of e-commerce, “which has been a beacon of economic growth during the pandemic period,” and that our collective global capacity to reconnect the world, and lift it into economic recovery post COVID-19 was also being placed at risk.

Highlighting the recovery bright spots being realized through Public Health Corridors and intra-regional resilience, Dr. Liu drew attention to the importance of governments and industry working together through ICAO to optimize prudent synergies between air transport objectives and current public health measures.

“This reminds us that international air routes require extensive negotiation and bilateral or multilateral agreement among countries, and it’s an important aspect of ICAO’s role to provide the forums where those activities take place,” she commented.

In looking ahead, Dr. Liu reminded the industry audience that, despite COVID-19’s catastrophic impacts, “we must continue to actively pursue our priorities and targets for aviation safety, security, efficiency and environmental sustainability.”

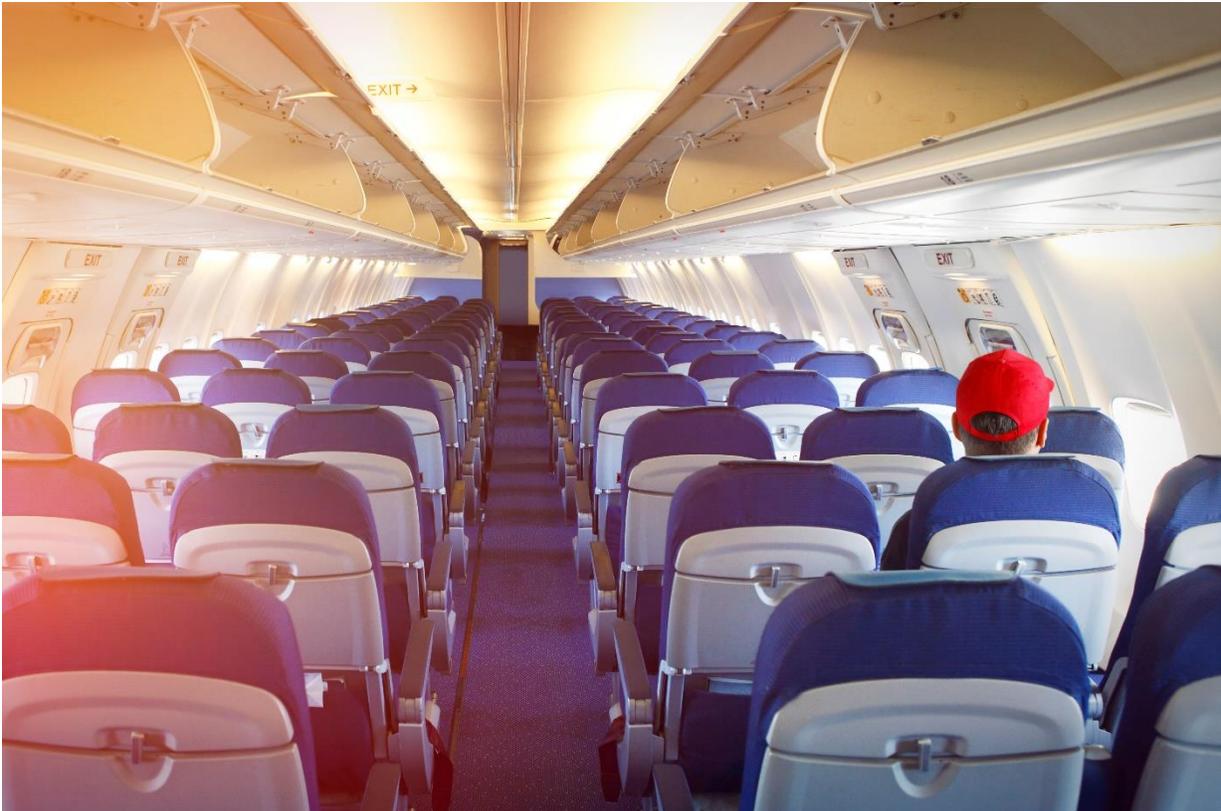
“This includes the pressing airspace and aircraft capacity concerns which were afflicting many air transport markets pre-COVID, and the new safety risks posed by operators struggling with diminishing financial and human resources,” she noted, “and there is also the strong global expectation that we will build back better post-pandemic, both in terms of aviation’s emissions and its overall impacts and contributions to ecological sustainability.”

The ICAO Secretary General welcomed the decision by the governing Council of ICAO to establish a new high-level forum with industry on sectoral innovation, stressing the many areas where it will be playing a part in the near-future, including within ICAO in terms of how it assesses

and enables new developments in autonomous, unmanned, sub orbital, and supersonic flight, in addition to Artificial Intelligence and blockchain solutions.

“These activities should remind us that we are ushering in an entirely new era in powered flight even as we confront this dire threat to our traditional operations,” she concluded.

“They also remind us that people love to fly, and to be flown, and that long after the pandemic is behind us aircraft will continue to connect us, and our world.”



Resources for Editors

About ICAO

A specialized agency of the United Nations, ICAO was created by governments in 1944 to support their diplomacy on international air transport matters. Since that time, countries have adopted over 12,000 standards and practices through ICAO which help to align their national regulations relevant to aviation safety, security, efficiency, capacity and environmental protection, enabling a truly global network to be realized. ICAO forums also provide opportunities for advice and advocacy to be shared with government decision-makers by industry groups, civil society NGOs, and other officially-recognized air transport stakeholders.

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