



ICAO joins transport leaders in exploring new horizons for post-COVID-19 economies and societies at 2021 ITF Summit

For immediate release

Montréal, 17 May 2021 – While participating in the high-level opening panel discussion at the International Transport Forum’s Summit 2021 event earlier today, ICAO Secretary General Dr. Fang Liu responded to questions on whether pandemic effects on air transport were likely to persist, on the role of governments in building back better in terms of innovation and sustainability, and on what ICAO has been learning from its emissions reduction Stocktaking Seminars in terms of near-term solutions – especially in the area of sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs).

Following introductory remarks by Irish Minister of Transport, Eamon Ryan, German Federal Minister of Transport and Digital Infrastructure, Andreas Scheuer, and ITF Secretary General, Young Tae Kim, the panel’s attention focused on the theme of *Innovation in transport: New horizons for the economy and society in the post-Covid-19 world*. In addition to Dr. Liu, the panel featured the insights and engagement of U.S. Secretary of Transportation, Pete Buttigieg, U.K. Minister and Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps MP, European Commissioner for Transport, Adina Vălean, Siemens Mobility CEO, Michael Peter, and Shell Downstream Director and Executive Committee member, Huibert Vigeveno.

On the topic of the persistence of pandemic impacts over the longer-term, Dr. Liu expressed that COVID-19 is affecting many aspects of how we live and work, and that she did expect these impacts to persist and comprise what is regularly being referred to as a ‘new normal’ post-pandemic.

In addition to the obvious likely impacts of increasingly virtual business practices on pre-pandemic business travel habits, Dr. Liu also highlighted the evolving consumer demand toward especially low emission travel options, and higher passenger expectations for a more health-protective travel experience.

“Travel consumers will want their long-term passenger experience to be tailored to defend better against infectious disease transmission, inclusive of contactless travel booking and boarding solutions, new types of combined health and security screening, and better-outfitted aircraft cabins,” she indicated.

The ICAO Secretary General also commented that all of these evolutions would rely heavily on sectoral innovation and digitalization, pointing out the advanced digital solutions for multimodal data and document exchange that are already beginning to significantly increase operational air cargo efficiencies to facilitate trade.

On the question of how governments playing a bigger part in the sector in light of many bailout conditions being established between countries and the airlines and airports registered to them, Dr. Liu reassured the participants that based on what has been the case at ICAO in recent years, “governments are prioritizing innovation today, and that not only pertains to their plans for the future but also to their longstanding preference for establishing performance-based standards for air transport.”

She added that the same applies to sustainability prioritization, and acknowledged that States have been pursuing a multi-faceted environmental work programme through ICAO for years now and are only becoming more aggressive with their agreed sustainability and emissions targets.

On the last question concerning what ICAO is seeing across the sector in terms of aviation innovations to reduce emissions, Dr. Liu underscored the work being carried out globally to innovate advanced and novel aircraft and propulsion technologies, operational improvements both in the air and on the ground, and opportunities for scaling up sustainable aviation fuels.

She noted that SAFs were already a reality, with over 330,000 commercial flights using mostly bio-based drop-in aviation fuels, and that the main priority on SAFs today is to scale up production levels, reduce costs, and increase competitiveness with conventional jet fuels.

Dr. Liu also emphasized that the ICAO Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) currently allows airlines to claim the CO₂ benefits of Sustainable Aviation fuels when specific sustainability criteria are met, representing the first global policy and agreement for incentivizing the use of sustainable fuels.



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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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