



ICAO Africa and Middle East Air Transport Symposium renews key multilateral commitments on path to recovery

For immediate release

Montréal, 1 September 2021 – ICAO’s Africa-Middle East Air Transport Symposium concluded yesterday with renewed regional commitments on addressing pandemic recovery efforts, the harmonization of regional air transport regulatory frameworks, cross-border investments in airlines, the impact of levies and charges on air transport sustainability, and financing approaches for the modernization of aviation infrastructure.

Focused around the theme of *Promoting and harnessing the benefits of liberalization*, the virtual event brought together high-level policy makers, air transport regulators, industry representatives, aviation professionals, and other stakeholders to drive important progress on regional air transport coordination and recovery.

In his opening remarks to the event, ICAO Secretary General Juan Carlos Salazar pledged the UN agency’s continuing strong support for regional aviation recovery efforts, and to the long-term objectives for increased Africa and Middle East air connectivity.

He also emphasized how current sectoral recovery priorities and opportunities were guiding important transformations, both for aviation and for ICAO itself.

A key objective of the Symposium was to examine and re-evaluate current air transport policies and regulatory frameworks in the context of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, and it was also importantly guided by the Resolutions of the Third Africa-Arab Summit.

The Symposium also highlighted the importance of the foundation for regional cooperation, liberalization, and prosperity which have been established by the Yamoussoukro, Lomé, Antananarivo, and Muscat Declarations.

After appreciating how aviation pre-pandemic had generated over ten million jobs in the AFI and MID Regions, and close to \$700 billion in combined GDP, Mr. Salazar recalled that full air transport recovery for the respective regions would help to assure the successful implementation of the African Continental Free trade area, Single African Air Transport Market, the freedom of mobility goals of the African Union’s Agenda 2063, and to reopening economically critical tourism markets for affected oceanic and landlocked countries.

The ICAO Secretary General also underscored the importance of ICAO’s upcoming High-level Conference on COVID-19 this October, as well as its 41st Assembly next year, to maintaining global momentum on reconnecting the world.

Highlights of the Africa-Middle East Air Transport Symposium commitments are provided below for further reference.



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.

[ICAO's COVID-19 Portal](#)

AFI-MID Symposium outcomes: highlights

Addressing the challenges of COVID-19 and States' aviation recovery efforts

- 1) Highlighted the unprecedented impact of COVID-19 pandemic on aviation industry in Africa and the Middle East regions, the consequential precipitous fall in travel demand, huge job loss and disruptions to businesses, supply chains, and the need to recover better from the pandemic.
- 2) Reaffirmed that the leadership role of ICAO, the recommendations and guidance of the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART), the on-going vaccination efforts and the economic and financial measures implemented by States and industry in both regions are yielding positive results on the gradual recovery of air travel, though the pace of the recovery varies significantly between the regions.
- 3) Stressed the importance for ICAO and States to continue to provide the required support, including a more vigorous implementation of the recommendations of the CART report, the removal of regulatory impediments and travel restrictions by States as well as to facilitate an efficient recovery and development of the industry in Africa and the Middle East, while taking into consideration the need for improved connectivity, revitalising, retooling, digitalizing and building resilience of the sector against future challenges.

Harmonizing Regional Air Transport Regulatory Framework

- 4) Called on States to demonstrate more commitments to the implementation of multilateral agreements on liberalization of air transport in Africa and the Middle East regions including the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) and the Damascus Agreement of 2004, liberalizing air transport between Arab States.
- 5) Urged States to harmonize regulatory framework for air transport in Africa and the Middle East, while encouraging African States to increase their efforts on the implementation of the Antananarivo Declaration on Air Transport Development in Africa, the Lomé Declaration on Development of Air Cargo in Africa, and the Action Plan on the Ministerial Declaration on Air Transport and Tourism Development in Africa.

- 6) Requested ICAO to continue to work with States, AFCAC, ACAO, industry and relevant stakeholders on the convergence in consumer protection, competition and taxation policies and regulations in Africa and the Middle East in view of its inherent benefits to the liberalization and sustainable growth of air transport in the regions.

Cooperation and Cross-Border Investments in Airlines

- 7) Emphasized the need for States in the African and Middle East regions to continue to make efforts in removing airline nationality and other border restrictions in order to encourage cross-border investments in airlines in both regions, considering the identified benefits to the States and industry, while conscious of the social, labour and flag of convenience concerns.
- 8) Agreed that cooperation between the airlines of both regions should be encouraged, which would enhance air connectivity in the regions and contribute to the growth and sustainable development of the regions' air transport market.

Impact of levies on air transport sustainability

- 9) Reaffirmed the importance of preventing the proliferation of taxes and fees on international air transport and the need for States to abide with relevant ICAO policies on taxes and charges.
- 10) Requested ICAO to continue to raise awareness through workshops, seminars and capacity building to enlighten States' policy makers and regulatory experts, as well as relevant stakeholders on the obstacle that excessive and unjust taxation constitute to the development and expansion of international travel, trade, tourism and the national economy.

Stimulating investments in financing the development of aviation infrastructure

- 11) Reiterated the importance of the Declaration and Framework for a Plan of Action for Development of Aviation Infrastructure in Africa, and urged States to continue to develop and modernize quality aviation infrastructure in Africa and the Middle East.
- 12) Underscored the need for States to integrate aviation infrastructure projects and investments into their national development plans with an appropriately balanced development of all transport modes.
- 13) Reiterated call on States in the regions to take pragmatic measures to build a transparent, stable and predictable investment climate to support aviation infrastructure development, through engaging multi-stakeholders and elevating the role of private sector.
- 14) Called upon financial institutions to assist Africa and the Middle East regions in meeting the requirement to enhance and modernize aviation infrastructure embracing new technologies and innovation, while addressing the recovery of the aviation sector through the COVID-19 pandemic.

General Conclusions

- 15) Encouraged States in Africa and the Middle East regions to share information and best practices among themselves that would promote the growth and development of aviation in the regions.
- 16) Urged ICAO to continue to promote the use of its policies and guidance material by States in their regulatory practices, through symposia, workshops and seminars.
- 17) Thanked ICAO for organizing the event, the moderators for facilitating the event sessions, and the Speakers for their insightful presentations and discussions.

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