

# Message from Inger Andersen

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The world is in the grip of a triple planetary crisis: the crisis of climate change, the crisis of nature and biodiversity loss, and the crisis of pollution and waste. The crisis threatens to undermine achievement of the sustainable development goals.

The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report is clear: current climate commitments and ongoing efforts imply a global temperature rise of well beyond 2°C above pre-industrial levels. The World Meteorological Organization in early 2022 warned that there is a 50/50 chance we will hit 1.5°C, at least temporarily, within five years. Meanwhile, nature and biodiversity loss continue at unprecedented levels, undermining the systems that keep humanity healthy and prosperous, while pollution and waste claims millions of lives each year and poisons our land, air and water.

The world is heading for disaster unless we reform our systems – and the aviation sector is no exception. Since the 2019 International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Environment Report, the COVID-19 pandemic has gravely impacted the aviation sector. 2020 passenger numbers were 55 per cent lower than 2019, and air cargo 12-15 per cent lower. As a result, greenhouse gas emissions briefly dipped.

However, this is only a blip in a long-term upward trend. Emissions from aviation grew by 27 per cent between 2015 and 2020, while passenger numbers grew by 38 per cent. Aviation emissions are already showing a clear rebound after the pandemic.

We cannot revive our economies at the expense of the environment because economy is environment, and environment is economy. Sustainability is no longer an add-on or luxury, but it is fundamental to the survival of every industry. We need to invest in zero-carbon, sustainable and more resilient infrastructure. In 2021, we saw encouraging pledges for carbon neutrality. Now we need these to turn into concrete plans – with the aviation sector backing these changes through strategies and investments.

One of the most impactful actions the aviation industry can take is transitioning away from fossil fuels to alternative, more climate-friendly alternatives. We need to promote the uptake of biofuels that are sustainably produced, without causing land-use conversion, biodiversity loss and redirection of precious water resources. I am thrilled to see, for the first time, a biodiversity chapter in the ICAO Environmental Report.



We also need to innovate and advance on the research front. Electric and hybrid-electric propulsion systems are revolutionising mobility technologies in many industries, from automotive to marine, a payoff of years of research and development. Similar efforts are underway in the aviation industry, laying the groundwork for wide adoption of electric flight.

We need to push for renewable-based energy solutions for aviation, and to make these more competitive by putting a high price on emissions. The current global energy crisis must incentivize many to move away from fossil fuels because of rising uncertainty and increasing prices.

At the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly, countries delivered a historic result by deciding on the need for a global agreement to end plastic pollution, recognizing that while plastics is a product on which our societies and economies depend, it is also a product that should generally not be for single use. People are increasingly paying a hefty price because of the throwaway culture. The airline industry has a big role to play, in the global shift away from single-use plastic products. Another important area of focus in the journey towards sustainability is in addressing waste. The International Air Transport Association estimates that food waste, packaging, print media, duty free, buy-on-board services and amenities collectively generate over 6 million tonnes of waste a year. By far the majority goes to landfill and incineration. But we need the aviation industry to invest in safe waste recovery and increased circularity.

The aviation sector has a significant way to journey to align with net-zero targets and the goal of living in harmony with nature. The journey ahead is not an easy one. But working together, we can find pathways to sustainability.