



**Opening remarks by the
Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar
to the ICAO CAPSCA EUR/MID conference**

(Virtual Event, 7 December 2021)

Good morning everyone,

1. It is my great honour to be welcoming you to this special interregional CAPSCA Conference, jointly organized by CAPSCA's European and Middle East stakeholders and encompassing some 71 States.
2. One of ICAO's main goals with this event is to listen to you and understand your priorities, and to begin refining our planning and projected outcomes on the basis of recent lessons learned, whether in terms of future preparedness, capacity building, or response measures.
3. All our work focuses on the benefits we can achieve for States as they continue to try and navigate the complex interconnections between public health priorities and our international air transport policies and procedures.
4. Working to reconnect the world in our current environment would simply not be possible without your commitment and participation under CAPSCA, and I would like to express ICAO's deep appreciation to everyone who is joining us here today.
5. The ICAO CAPSCA programme has been involved in numerous public health events of international concern since it was established in 2006 to respond to the SARS epidemic.
6. As some of you will know, its main objectives are to assist States with the implementation of the ICAO public health related guidance and the WHO International Health Regulations, and to improve preparedness planning and rapid response capacities in this area more generally.
7. There are currently 158 or 82% of ICAO Member States who are now CAPSCA Members. This includes 79% of European and North Atlantic States, and 100% of Middle East States.

8. During the COVID-19 pandemic, CAPSCA experts have made very important contributions to the three phases of guidance issued by the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force, or 'CART', as well as to the new manual ICAO issued on *COVID-19 Cross-border Risk Management*.
9. CAPSCA insights have been similarly invaluable to the passenger Facilitation matters we've needed to address with countries through ICAO, including recommendations on how States can establish safe Public Health Corridors (PHC) between specific travel markets.
10. CAPSCA resources have additionally conducted several global and regional webinars during this crisis, and lately its new Scientific Advisory group (CASAG) has developed four scientific reports on matters of current priority – including most recently a new status report on the Omicron variant.
11. This past October, ICAO convened a High-level Conference on COVID-19 to help augment the recovery momentum we'd seen steadily building in all global regions.
12. Of its many commitments and recommendations, the HLCC specifically recommended that the CAPSCA framework should be strengthened, and we're very much looking forward to suggestions from States and stakeholders on how to achieve this.
13. Other HLCC outcomes will be importantly informing your deliberations at the global CAPSCA Symposium, set for the 28th of March next year, as well as States' discussions at ICAO's 41st Assembly, next September.
14. Both these events will be critical opportunities to drive multilateral commitments and action toward a strengthened, more sustainable CAPSCA, so that it can continue to help us reconnect our world and guide aviation to its post-pandemic new normal.
15. There are several current key priorities which CAPSCA has been emphasizing to States, and the first of these is to assure they mitigate the COVID-19 infection risk by implementing a multi-layer risk management strategy that is evidence-based and performance-based.
16. A second key priority is for countries to try and keep their borders open and restore international travel through the implementation of bilateral or multilateral Public Health Corridors.

17. To do so, they should make use of the implementation resources ICAO has made available in its PHC iPack, and other regional initiatives, and to safeguard both international and domestic operations.
18. This PHC priority includes assuring strong and dependable support for national Civil Aviation Authorities (CAAs), because regulators ultimately have to interface with public health authorities to implement these corridors effectively, and based on clear and mutually-recognized measures between all parties concerned.
19. The **third** key priority we've asked States to attend to concerns the **adoption of interoperable digital health proofs** to facilitate travel, and to enhance passenger confidence in safe, seamless, and healthy screening and other processes.
20. States which are issuing health certificates should furthermore consider adopting the ICAO specifications for Visible Digital Seals for non-constrained environments, or other interoperable formats. Emphasis must also be placed on the importance of assuring capacities to accept non-digital certificates as well, so that No Country is Left Behind.
21. In addition, those States issuing digital health proofs, based on public key infrastructure, should share their public key certificates with the ICAO PKD office, so as to enhance the mutual recognition and global interoperability of solutions.
22. The **fourth and last priority** I would raise here regards the need for the **effective sharing of information**. This is both an immediate and a longer-term priority, alongside our other long-term objectives to strengthen the CAPSCA Programme and ICAO's relationship with the WHO.
23. What we additionally need from States to address these priorities are firstly membership in the CAPSCA programme, and secondly the identification of national CAPSCA focal points.
24. Countries cannot benefit from this framework unless they commit to and participate in it.
25. Countries also need to take urgent action to implement the latest Annex 9 Standards to the Chicago Convention, including those requiring National Facilitation Committees. These governance instruments are essential to establishing effective local coordination between air transport and public health decision makers, and to CAPSCA as well.
26. Lastly, we have to determine sustainable funding mechanisms for this very essential global programme, and work to assure stronger global compliance with its recommendations and guidelines.

27. In concluding today, I'd like to take a moment to express ICAO's appreciation for the European and Middle East experts that contributed to our cross-border risk management manual, the Scientific Advisory group, and the development of the PHC guidance material.
28. I would highlight in this regard the representatives from EASA, the Netherlands, the UK and Jordan. And lastly, I thank the individuals who will be assisting us as Subject Matter Experts in the PHC iPacks, and the regional CAPSCA Chairpersons and Technical Advisors of both your regions.
29. I'd also like to remind you that you have an important webinar on the outcomes of the High-level Conference ahead of you next week, on 15 December, and to thank you all once again for your dedication and service in this truly urgent and global cause.
30. I wish you very engaging and productive discussions.
31. Thank you.