



**Remarks by
the Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar,
YD Day Anniversary - High Level Ministerial Meeting
“25 Years of YD: The Way Forward to Achieve AU Agenda 2063”
28 November 2024, Brazzaville, Congo**

1. It is my great honour and a pleasure to join you here in Brazzaville to celebrate today the 25th Anniversary of the Yamoussoukro Decision. As we approach the end of 2024, we also celebrate the 80th anniversary of ICAO, and we are thankful to all of you for being a significant part our journey. The distinguished attendance we see today demonstrates the high level and very significant collective commitment to strengthening African civil aviation.
2. Your participation in this event reflects your recognition of the crucial importance of international air connectivity as a driver of economic, social and cultural development, as a critical enabler of travel, trade and tourism growth, and as a catalyst for job creation.
3. I would like to extend my appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Congo and AFCAC for inviting ICAO to participate in this auspicious event.
4. The exemplary hospitality and generous support of the Government of the Republic of Congo have made this crucial gathering possible.
5. I would also like to express ICAO’s gratitude for our close collaboration with the African Union Commission, Africa's Regional Economic Communities, and the African Development Bank on the priorities we will address today.
6. Let us be clear: the opportunities before African aviation are unparalleled. This continent is home to over 1.4 billion people, accounting for almost one-fifth of the world population, but has only three percent share of the global air services market.

7. Looking at international air traffic serving Africa, we can furthermore see that Intra-African flights represent only 23 percent of the overall total.
8. These figures clearly indicate why the African aviation market holds the greatest potential for growth worldwide.
9. Harnessing and maximizing the benefits of air transport will require quality services and infrastructure. Our efforts in this regard must especially focus on the liberalization of market access, and the establishment of robust regulatory frameworks and governance.
10. These priorities encompass air transport modernization, harmonization and the convergence of regulatory approaches and regimes in States. We must advance connectivity, competition, and transparency to benefit our growing consumer base.
11. That is why the Yamoussoukro Decision is so important. The agreement 25 years ago was one of the most significant milestones for air transport liberalization in African history. The Decision established four fundamental principles that remain as relevant today as they did then:
 - a) Firstly, the full liberalization of intra-African air transport services in terms of access, capacity, frequency, and tariffs.
 - b) Secondly, the free exercise of first, second, third, fourth and fifth freedom rights for passenger and freight air services by eligible airlines.
 - c) Thirdly, the principle of fair competition and the liberalization of tariffs.
 - c) And finally, compliance with ICAO safety standards and recommended practices.
12. The Yamoussoukro Decision built upon the foundation of the 1988 Yamoussoukro Declaration, addressing implementation challenges and reinvigorating commitment to these essential reforms.
13. States must maintain momentum toward these liberalization objectives. Beyond improving service quality and pricing, liberalized policies allow States to redirect resources from legacy carrier subsidies toward investments with greater economic impact.

14. Enhanced competition will lead to reduced transport costs, addressing significant trade barriers for African countries while boosting tourism potential. These improvements advance both the African Union Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, while supporting implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area.
15. Experience with liberalized air services elsewhere has clearly revealed that they result in increased regional and intercontinental trade. Competitive carriers offering frequent flights at accessible fares create new opportunities for travel and trade.
16. That is among the reasons why ICAO fully supports the Single African Air Transport Market. This African Union Flagship Programme was launched in 2018 to support the effective implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision. It offers enhanced mobility, trade, tourism, and services both within Africa and globally.
17. ICAO is contributing statistics, big data analytics, forecasting, economic analysis, and the development of an aviation satellite account methodology to help operationalize this market.
18. We will continue to emphasize the critical relationship between air connectivity and sustainable socio-economic development, a mission the President of the ICAO Council and I have prioritized throughout our terms.
19. Let me now turn to the topic of infrastructure financing and modernization, which is supported by the Declaration and Framework for a Plan of Action for Development of Aviation Infrastructure in Africa.
20. The African Union Commission, ICAO, and AFCAC recently completed a comprehensive aviation infrastructure gap analysis examining airports, air navigation services, and aircraft fleet capacity based on 25-year traffic projections and regulatory requirements. This analysis will inform regional and national civil aviation master plans while ensuring infrastructure development adheres to ICAO SARPs.
21. These findings will help determine funding requirements and identify appropriate financing mechanisms at State and Regional levels.

22. As reflected in the recently approved new long-term ICAO Strategic Plan for 2026 - 2050, let me reassure you that ICAO remains fully committed to the *No Country Left Behind* initiative, with Africa remaining a priority for implementation support. Adequate training capacity will remain particularly essential to meet regional needs, particularly as States and regional economic communities realize the transformative benefits of open skies policies.
23. I would like to underscore that while we are talking about growth, African countries are presented with significant opportunities as progress is made on the global agreement towards achieving net zero emissions reached by ICAO Member States at the 41st Session of the Assembly. In this regard, the adoption of a Global Framework at the Third ICAO Conference on Aviation and Alternative Fuels is promising. It targets a 5% CO₂ emissions reduction by 2030.
24. To help achieve this, the ICAO Finvest Hub establishes a platform to facilitate investment partnerships. This hub is of particular benefit to regions that are not yet producing sustainable aviation fuel, or SAF.
25. It will build on the success of the ICAO Assistance, Capacity-Building and Training program for SAF, also called ACT-SAF. ACT-SAF now has more than 200 partners. In the coming months and years, the ACT-SAF programme will continue to provide tailor-made support to States, and accompany them in the transition to cleaner aviation energy.
26. This programme has already boosted States' expertise by delivering more than a dozen technical trainings, and it has resulted in the completion of several SAF feasibility studies. The grounds have also been laid to deliver around 50 feasibility and business implementation studies by 2028, notably in African States.
27. All of this points to the fact that Africa's vast natural and human resources, combined with its receptiveness to emerging aviation technologies, position the continent for global leadership in the next air transport revolution.
28. As we contemplate these opportunities, I wish you productive deliberations, and look forward to strengthening the bonds between ICAO, the African Union Commission, and AFCAC, which are very beneficial to States and the aviation sector.