



**Remarks by the
Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the 69th ECAC special meeting of Directors General**

(Virtual Meeting, 27 August 2020)

Dear President of ECAC, Dear Ingrid,
Dear Executive Secretary of ECAC, Dear Patricia,
Dear Friends and colleagues,

After eight Special meetings organized by the ECAC Secretariat led by me, in my capacity as Executive Secretary, and after last year's Special meeting in Malaga, in which I attended as Italian Representative on the Council and candidate to the Council Presidency, it is with a certain nostalgia but also great pleasure that I participate this year as President of the Council.

Last year I outlined the main objectives that I intended to pursue if elected President of the Council of ICAO. The most important was to enhance the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization beginning with the improvement of internal communication and transparency and the increase of mutual trust between the Council and the Secretariat.

In this regard, I would say that we are on the right track although there is still a lot to be done. It is not an easy process due to the complexity of the Organization and, sometimes, cultural differences.

I wish today to take the opportunity to recall some of the main challenges and achievements of the Council during the first two Sessions presided by me.

As we are all well aware, the COVID-19 global pandemic has had enormous negative impacts on global aviation, with unprecedented challenges in terms of contractions to international tourism and trade, with some of the most severe of these effects being endured in Europe by ECAC Member States.

The functioning of ICAO has been seriously impacted as well. The Secretariat and the Delegations started working remotely in mid March and continue to do so. Similarly, for the first time in its history, the Council of ICAO has held meetings in video-conference facing some challenges due to limited interpretation services. Luckily, the Secretariat has been able to guarantee full interpretation services beginning with the Committee phase of the forthcoming Session.

Regarding initiatives related to the COVID-19 pandemic, ICAO has been highly active since the onset of the pandemic and we continue today to fulfill our important global role. In particular, I wanted the Regional Organizations fully involved in the activities of the Council Aviation Recovery Task Force in order to receive their valuable contributions and to facilitate the implementation of the measures.

The CART Report and Guidelines which the ICAO Council established are being employed worldwide to help align national and regional responses, and the Secretariat has undertaken extensive work in providing tailored analyses, monitoring, and guidance tools to help our Member States adapt and adjust in these trying circumstances.

Throughout these impacts, work has also not stopped at the Council level in terms of advancing ICAO's work programme, and the expectations placed upon the Organization by the last Assembly.

At the 220th Session earlier this year, one of the key decisions taken by the Council was to amend the CORSIA baseline such that the 2019 and 2020 emissions totals will be considered as identical with respect to CORSIA's upcoming pilot phase.

This solution will prevent the significantly lower 2020 emissions levels we're seeing creating a distorted result, and one which would have led to operators and States offsetting more than projected despite producing much lower emissions this year due to COVID-19.

Council also advanced several other CORSIA developments relating to its Technical Advisory Body (TAB).

Another important development from the Council's 220th Session was its adoption of Amendment 28 to Annex 9, which provides a framework for the collection, processing, analysis and sharing of Passenger Name Record (PNR) data.

This addresses the expectations set out in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2396 (2017), and also includes new standards to improve travel document security.

In March of this year, the Council emphasized the importance of global multilateral efforts in responding to the COVID-19 outbreak requesting the establishment of a dedicated task force to review the existing health-related Standards and Recommended Practices of Annex 9.

A Health Issues Outbreaks in Aviation Task Force has therefore now been established, comprising subject-matter experts, UN and observer organizations, and industry. It will undertake its work under the supervision of the Air Transport Committee of the Council.

The Council also advanced many important governance decisions and evaluations this past Session, relating to its own efficiencies and to important Secretariat developments in terms of the ICAO Ethics Framework, the implementation of results-based management approaches, and many other internal priorities for the Organization.

One word on the cash flow difficulties encountered by ICAO due also to COVID-19. It is not normal for a great organization as ICAO to face a situation as it had a few months ago with only two months of cash available. The situation now is improved but not resolved.

In this regard, I have noted that some European States have not yet paid their 2020 contribution. While it may seem trivial to talk about money in this occasion, I wish to underline that delays of payment can be detrimental and, sometimes, can contribute to exacerbate existing problems. Therefore, I hope that you understand the importance of fulfilling your 2020 financial obligations as a matter of priority.

The 220th Session was lastly notable in terms of the significant level of interest Council devoted to the ongoing investigation of Flight PS 752 and, more in general, on the safe flight over areas of conflicts.

It heard strong messages from the States most directly concerned in the tragic loss of this aircraft, and re-emphasized its support and appreciation for the Canada-led “safer skies” initiative, which seeks to establish a common set of practices to better protect passengers from the risk of flying in or near conflict zones.

Looking ahead at next Council Session, several important topics will be addressed. I will just mention the continuation and hopefully finalization of the analysis on the establishment of the High Level Body with the Industry. We will have two informal briefings in September and will continue the discussions formally in October and November. In this regard, I wish to underline that the excellent cooperation between ICAO and the Industry in the context of the CART Task Force has given positive indications on how the relationship should be consolidated.

I wish also to mention that the Council has started an analysis on the structure of Council Committees and Groups. This work will continue during next Session. The objective is to simplify the structure, avoiding duplications with the objective to focus most of the discussions in the Committees and Groups, bringing to the Council well prepared decisions and confining the discussions in the Council on topics not agreed in the Committees or Groups.

Finally, the Council will have to address the dispute under article 84 of the Chicago Convention between Qatar and UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain.

More in general, as we look ahead in times such as these, I think it's important that we also take note of some of the hope and opportunities this pandemic presents to us.

Many older and more emissions-intensive aircraft, for example, are being pulled from the skies in vast numbers. These will be replaced by much greener, more efficient jets, and by the 2030s the age of electric commercial aircraft may well be upon us.

More innovations will arrive in the form of wide ranging air mobility, both private and public, and far more precise and integrated operations. Together these changes could usher in a revolution in civilian flight and aviation's next golden age.

There is also the point that with many airline bailouts having been urgently undertaken, States may be playing a stronger financial and regulatory role in aviation in the not too distant future. Some may perhaps even return to being public airline shareholders.

These and many similar dynamics will be playing out quickly in the months and years ahead, and together they represent a once-in-generations-chance for humanity and aviation to assure that the enduring legacy of COVID-19 and air transport will be one of innovation, recovery, and sustainability.

We must also do our utmost to ensure that the ministries overseeing your civil aviation authorities (CAAs) understand the importance of assuring sustainable funding for what will be required by your CAAs during the restart and recovery of your air transport systems.

ICAO EUR/NAT is organizing a workshop on this topic on 29 September, the outcomes of which will be presented to the EUR/NAT DGCA meeting on 20 October.

In closing now, I'm also very pleased to see that considerable progress has been made toward finalizing the outstanding transition arrangements relating to the legal separation of ECAC from ICAO on 31 August 2020, and that a solid and sustainable foundation has been laid for future and enhanced cooperation between them.

In this regard, I wish to underline the importance that I attach to close cooperation between ICAO and Regional Organizations.

Regional Organizations have been established by ICAO in accordance with Article 55 of the Chicago Convention in order to enhance and facilitate the pursuit of ICAO objectives at the regional level. Regional Offices and Regional Organizations must work in close cooperation in order to pursue these objectives. I wish to underscore that close cooperation facilitates the common efforts with a better use of human resources. I also wish to reiterate on this occasion that, notwithstanding the administrative separation between ECAC and EUR/NAT, the cooperation between the two bodies must be enhanced in the interest of all member States of the Region.

In concluding, let me thank ECAC for having invited me, you all for the warm friendship and I wish you a fruitful and successful meeting.