



**Keynote address by  
the Council President of the  
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)  
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,  
to the 2024 Future Aviation Forum**

*(Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 20 May 2024)*

*His Excellency Saleh bin Nasser Al-Jasser, Minister of Transport of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,  
Honourable Ministers,  
His Excellency Abdulaziz Al-Duailej, President of GACA,  
Distinguished Directors General of Civil Aviation,  
ICAO Council Representatives,  
Distinguished guests,*

I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to the General Authority of Civil Aviation for inviting me to address the opening of the 2024 Future Aviation Forum. This Forum has brought together here in Riyadh so many global leaders from States and from across the aviation value chain and its related industries.

I would also like to say that in hosting the third edition of the Future Aviation Forum, Saudi Arabia is sending a loud and clear message to the international aviation community of a Country clearly focused on the future.

"Elevating Global Connectivity" is a relevant theme for our discussions in these two days. Adopting and implementing aviation policies aimed at fostering collaboration and partnerships, developing skills and talent, promoting sustainability and innovation, and leveraging advanced technologies, is crucial to enhance global connectivity and ultimately to support social and economic development of a country.

This event is particularly timely.

It is coinciding with the global celebrations of the 80th anniversary of the adoption of the Chicago Convention. These celebrations provide us all with an opportunity to reflect on our achievements over the last eight decades and inspire us to think about how ICAO and the aviation industry should evolve now and in the decades to come.

Of course, these thoughts are set against the backdrop of the climate emergency.

UN Secretary General Guterres has called for all means of transport to realize net-zero emissions by 2050, and we have answered this call with targets and plans for international air transport.

Saudi Arabia is taking the lead on this endeavour. Its commitment to the sustainable development of civil aviation in the region and globally is illustrated in many ways as, for example, the

Saudi Vision 2030. This Vision will shape the near future of the Country and air transport will play a crucial role in this regard.

Let me also take this opportunity to highlight Saudi Arabia's recent exemplary work under the Saudi Green Initiative with ambitious environmental targets.

Looking at the global level, I would like to once again commend the landmark adoption of a long-term global aspirational goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, commonly referred to as the LTAG, by the world's governments at the 41st ICAO Assembly less than two years ago.

We are urgently responding to the many priorities the LTAG has given us and are especially racing to make Sustainable Aviation Fuels and Low Carbon Aviation Fuels both affordable and accessible, as we know that these fuels can provide over half of the needed CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions.

In November last year, a massive leap forward was achieved at the Third ICAO Conference on Aviation and Alternative Fuels (CAAF/3) in Dubai. Just ahead of COP28, the conference resulted in the adoption of a crucially important Global Framework, and a global target of a 5% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030.

It is in this context that ICAO is developing a detailed roadmap that will guide the Organization, the stakeholders and Member States towards this target. In particular, the roadmap will include working with energy and financial sectors to accelerate much-needed investment in this area by fostering international cooperation. An especially important priority here is the operationalization of the ICAO project denominated Finvest Hub.

It aims to facilitate access to investment capacities and funding from financial institutions. I would like to highlight that it places a special emphasis on supporting developing countries and states with specific needs in the framework of the "No country left behind" policy.

It is also in this context that I am pleased to share that 150 States and organizations are now part of ICAO's Assistance, Capacity Building, and Training programme for SAF, known as ACT-SAF.

ACT-SAF provides training, feasibility studies, support for SAF certification and policy development, and implementation of specific SAF projects for States.

Another key element for sustainability, and in fact all of air transport's global priority, is innovation. Indeed, the increasing diversity of innovators and the accelerating pace of innovations have compelled ICAO to consider how the Organization can enhance its responsiveness and relevance in this fast-changing environment.

One important milestone of this journey was formalized with the adoption of the ICAO Assembly Resolution A40-27, denominated Innovation in Aviation.

In accordance with this Resolution, the organization is systematically reviewing the adequacy of its formal standard-development processes in order to keep pace with innovation. Additionally, the Organization is looking at expanding its partnerships to leverage expertise developed outside of the aviation sector.

Importantly, this Resolution also stressed the role of ICAO as the forum for member States where to exchange their experiences and approaches to innovation.

This mandate has been translated into actions.

For example, the ICAO Council thanks to discussions at strategic level with industry leaders through the establishment of an Industry Consultative Forum has scanned the industry's priorities for the coming years, identifying: climate change, aviation resilience, digitalization, and cybersecurity as priority focus areas for our attention and action.

In particular, aviation digitalization is already an integral part of the current passengers' experience. I refer for example to the passenger facial identification, based on the ICAO Digital Travel Credentials Specifications, which is becoming common in several airports. I am very pleased to mention these positive developments in particular in the year, 2024, that ICAO has designated as year of Facilitation.

Regarding cybersecurity, ICAO, key stakeholders in the aviation industry, governments and academia, are working collectively to reduce the vulnerability of our sector and respond in a coordinated and efficient manner to cyber attacks.

Advance Air Mobility, is a completely new facet of air transport. Considered "future" a few years ago, it is now a reality with the first operations beginning in a few months. I wish to recall that ICAO is organizing the first ever advanced air mobility symposium next September. This symposium will bring to Montreal products from several parts of the world.

Artificial intelligence, big data applications, and the overall digitalization of aviation are just a few of the frontier technologies that we collectively need to better introduce, especially given our commitment to ensure the technological and commercial relevance of ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices.

This is an illustration of how the pace of innovation today is placing significant demands on ICAO. These demands, in turn, have an impact on States, which must create know-how, evolve their national and regional infrastructure and regulatory systems in accordance with global norms and strategies. Many are not fully equipped to respond to the extent and pace of modernization required. But ICAO is ready to support them in the spirit of No Country Left Behind.

We have been here before.

For example, the jet era launched a revolution for all aspects of aviation, including ICAO.

And today, new entrants, advanced air mobility and evolving operational paradigms, and new certification and oversight models are among the changes challenging regulators and aviation master planners.

While these are challenging times for these and many other reasons, and I refer in particular to geopolitical instabilities and crisis, I wish to emphasize that whatever the future of international civil aviation will look like, it will continue to be guided by the Chicago Convention. Let me briefly cite from its Preamble:

"The future development of international civil aviation can greatly help to create and preserve friendship and understanding among the nations and peoples of the world". And it can effectively "promote that cooperation between nations and peoples upon which the peace of the world depends".

I feel it is important to recall the words of the Preamble of the Chicago Convention here in this Region that is facing difficult moments.

International air transport was established as a universal bridge builder - building bridges between nations and continents, between cultures and traditions, between individuals and communities.

And it is that very spirit of cooperation that has guided its glorious past, will ensure a remarkable future and guide our discussions at this Future Aviation Forum.

Thank you.