



**Opening keynote address by  
the Council President of the  
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)  
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,  
to the ICAO Facilitation 2024 Global Summit**

*(Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 21 May 2024)*

*Distinguished participants at the ICAO Facilitation 2024 Global Summit,*

Before starting, I wish to extend the ICAO condolences to the Islamic Republic of Iran on the passing of the President, His Excellency Mr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi. As President of one of the 193 ICAO Member States, ICAO lowers today its flag to half-mast as a mark of respect.

It is a pleasure this afternoon to address this distinguished gathering as we convene for the ICAO Facilitation 2024 Global Summit during this Year of Facilitation and I wish to thank very much the General Authority of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and in particular its President, His Excellency Abdulaziz Al Duailej for hosting this important event. The presence of you all here today underscores the shared commitment to advancing facilitation efforts in air transport, a crucial endeavor that demands our utmost attention.

As we all recognize, facilitation encompasses the critical efforts to prevent unnecessary delays for aircraft, crew, passengers, and cargo, particularly when navigating the complexities of immigration, quarantine, customs, and clearance processes. Seamless coordination among government authorities and close collaboration with airlines and airport operators are essential. Only by working together the common goal of streamlining processes and enhancing the overall travel experience can be achieved.

Facilitation's importance to global air transport is reflected in the fact that just five years after establishing the Convention on International Civil Aviation 80 years ago, the international community established its Annex 9 – Facilitation.

The diversity of decision-makers and subject matter experts assembled here today presents an invaluable opportunity to initiate or deepen conversations, fostering further collaboration at the national, regional, and international levels. Cooperation is crucial to continuously enhance facilitation, leading to a more efficient air transport system that can meet the ever-growing demands of our sector.

As we reflect on the theme "Past. Present. Future: 75 Years of Enabling Air Travel," we are reminded of the challenges we have faced, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed the critical importance of resilient and flexible border processes. ICAO's steadfast efforts to enhance system resilience, with facilitation at the forefront, have been instrumental in fortifying our global aviation ecosystem.

Indeed, ICAO is encouraging the aviation community to see the Chicago Convention's 80th anniversary as a valuable opportunity for us to comprehensively envision the future for each nations' aviation sector, and for the global air transport network as an indivisible whole.

This is a moment to thoroughly reflect on our rich history while simultaneously planning in a strategic and farsighted manner.

Annex 9 stands as a testament to the dedicated and diligent work of ICAO and its Member States, providing a comprehensive framework for harmonized global aviation efficiency, ensuring the smooth movement of persons, baggage, cargo, and aircraft across international borders.

As we look to the future, compliance with Annex 9 provisions must remain a key pillar. Strong implementation efforts by States are paramount, and ICAO will continue to provide targeted training, capacity building, and implementation support to ensure this objective is met.

Annex 9 is one of the most diverse annexes to the Convention, encompassing a wide range of facilitation matters beyond border management and security. It addresses critical issues such as accessibility of aviation to persons with disabilities, management of public health-related matters, and assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families.

Dedicated panel discussions throughout this event will examine these priority areas identified by the facilitation community.

In sessions 2 and 5, we will delve into current efforts and future plans for more seamless passenger travel. Significant improvements are being brought forward by innovations such as the ICAO Digital Travel Credential, which is supported by core infrastructure like the ICAO Public Key Directory and implemented through intelligent processes with appropriate data sharing.

This reflects the fact that we must embrace solutions such as automated passenger processing, common use formats, digital solutions, and smart infrastructure to deliver more and deliver better. I am confident that the discussions in these panels will be instructive, motivating, and inspire further work on these critical facilitation matters globally.

Facilitating smooth and efficient traveller movements throughout the entire journey is crucial to supporting aviation's development and ultimately to contributing to social and economic development. Streamlining traffic flows will not only improve the passenger experience but is also a key consideration for both States and private sector businesses operating in aviation. Technological innovations are powerful enablers of efficiency enhancement and can provide the resilience we so urgently require.

Beyond our gathering today, Facilitation will continue to feature prominently in the calendar of international civil aviation events.

ICAO will host dedicated events on assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families in November in the Netherlands, and a symposium on accessibility in international civil aviation co-organized with IATA and ACI, reflecting the common interest of States, airlines, and airport operators in this matter.

The ICAO Traveller Identification Programme (TRIP) symposium will build upon the discussions related to the passenger journey and innovation. Facilitation will also be a prominent feature in events such as the ICAO Advanced Air Mobility Symposium and those organized by our partners. We also look forward to a High-Level Ministerial meeting on Facilitation in 2025, which will feed into the deliberations of the 42nd ICAO Assembly that year. I invite you all to play an active part in directing and

influencing these discussions. Your insights, experiences, and collaborative efforts will be instrumental in shaping the policies, strategies, and solutions that will define the future of Facilitation in aviation.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the progress made in this region towards the facilitation objectives. Notably, 12 States have established National Air Transport Facilitation Committees (NATFC), while 9 States have joined the ICAO Public Key Directory (PKD), with a tenth currently in the process. Advance Passenger Information (API) is in force in 8 States, and we anticipate it will soon be in force in an additional 2 States.

Such initiatives demonstrate the region's commitment to advancing facilitation objectives and serve as a model for effective collaboration and knowledge sharing among States and stakeholders.

The comprehensive coordination led by the ICAO Middle East Regional Office with various stakeholders is also crucial to this momentum, and I would like to express my gratitude to our regional office staff for their numerous efforts and achievements.

In closing, I invite all State representatives here to carry the energy created by this event back to your capitals and States. Organize events, discussions, and activities to mark and celebrate the ICAO Year of Facilitation. ICAO, through its Secretariat at Headquarters and in the Regional Offices, is eager to provide advice, support, and share information on such celebrations through its website, newsletters, and outreach work.

Let us work together to ensure that this Summit is productive and constructive, laying the groundwork for a future where facilitation in air transport is a cornerstone of global progress.

Thank you.