



**Address by the  
Secretary General of the  
International Civil Aviation Organization  
Dr. Fang Liu  
to the Fourth COVID-19 Information Sharing Session  
with APAC CAA Directors General**

*(Virtual Event, 6 July 2021, Bangkok )*

*APAC Directors General of Civil Aviation,  
Senior Industry and Government representatives,  
Ladies and gentlemen,*

1. It's an honour to join you today for the Fourth COVID-19 Information Sharing Session with Asia and Pacific Directors General of Civil Aviation.
2. I am very encouraged to note that so many of you, including our international organisation partners across the APAC region, have come together in the spirit of ICAO's No-Country-Left-Behind initiative and our shared objective of achieving the sustainable recovery of the global civil aviation system from the devastating impacts of COVID-19.
3. A number of States in the APAC Region have indeed distinguished themselves by their rapid control of the pandemic. As a result, the recovery of domestic flights and bilateral air services in this region have been impressive. ICAO recognizes the efforts and commitments to best practice that have enabled this, and I encourage you to seize this and every opportunity to share your expertise.
4. Further to this point, I wish to congratulate you on your foresight in establishing the APAC COVID-19 Contingency and Recovery Planning Group (ACCRPG) as a dedicated information sharing mechanism for all APAC stakeholders, and one which many of you are today benefitting from.

5. The Co-Chairs of the ACCRPG will present their Annual Report today, and it's encouraging that it has already set out a path forward for the coming year as well. Your close and effective cooperation remains more essential than ever to both regional and local pandemic recovery success.
6. As we're all very much aware, COVID-19 had a devastating impact on civil aviation last year. Entering into 2021, global air travel volumes continue to be weak amid virus resurgences and continuing restrictions on international mobility. ICAO's mid-June projections point to a total 2021 passenger drop of between 41 to 49 per cent, and airline revenue losses of between 289 and 323 billion dollars.
7. Asia/Pacific 2021 recovery is keeping pace with the world average, with a projected decline of 43 to 46 per cent in 2021 compared to 2019, and airline losses of 106 to 113 billion dollars.
8. This past March, the ICAO Council adopted the Phase III amendments to its main pandemic Recommendations and associated *Take-off Guidance Document*. These were originally issued in June of last year by its Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART).
9. Following the emergence of new virus variants, vaccine rollouts, and other innovations to battle COVID-19, the CART Taskforce is now targeting specific issues related to your countries' multilayer risk management strategies, with the ultimate objective of restoring public confidence in air travel and aviation's contributions to national economies.
10. CART Phase III supports the creation of public health travel corridors, safe and efficient global vaccine distribution, the facilitation of all-cargo air services, and standardized COVID-19 testing certificates for secure international use.
11. It also recommends air crew vaccination considerations, safety priorities relating to sectoral recovery, and an encouragement for national civil aviation and transport officials to advocate more vigorously for air transport public health and economic priorities.

12. While CART Recommendation 19 mirrors current WHO guidance that vaccination should not be a prerequisite for international travel, we are seeing an eagerness in many States and Regions to begin to explore vaccine passport options, which is also fully supported by the industry.
13. The ICAO Air Transport Committee has recently approved the Visible Digital Seal (VDS) specifications which ICAO has been developing for several years, and which have been eagerly anticipated in this context.
14. VDS provide a practical and secure verification solution for digital travel or health credentials, making use of the existing e-passport trust model, and are now being deployed in vaccine passport trials. A new ICAO webinar on VDS is now being finalized which will explain their scope and potential for Member States in further detail.
15. From an overall standpoint, ICAO and its Member States clearly recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic is not only a health crisis – it is also an economic and financial crisis presenting governments with very difficult trade-offs in terms of the health, economic, and social priorities concerned.
16. While public health is, and must remain, the overriding priority for civil societies and aviation leaders and planners, we must also continue to support and raise awareness of the critical role being played by air transport in global crisis response and recovery.
17. These issues and more will be at the forefront of discussions at the High-Level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC) which ICAO is convening this October, and which further details were provided on in our State Letter of 20 May.
18. The Conference will consider short- and long-term implications engendered by the crisis, proposals for States to use in tackling safety, operational and economic challenges, and streamlined policy responses to the post-pandemic state of aviation.
19. ICAO has noted that about 36 per cent of the APAC States have fully reviewed the CART's 20 recommendations, and that they are at various stages of implementing them. I urge all States to

make use of the ICAO APAC Office's outreach and work with them in implementing the CART Recommendations and related guidance, and I'm pleased to advise you that our latest ICAO Implementation Packages (iPack) on the establishment of Public Health Corridors (PHCs) is now available.

20. I would like to thank Australia and New Zealand in this regard for sharing their experience and lessons learnt of their safe travel zone at the recent 10<sup>th</sup> ICAO APAC COVID-19 Contingency and Recovery Planning Group (ACCRPG/10) meeting, and to encourage them and other States to continue to forge progress in this area.
21. I would also take this opportunity to thank Australia and China for their recent funding commitments.
22. Under its Partnerships for Recovery programme, Australia has committed to a 304 million dollar Pacific COVID-19 Response Package , including an immediate sum of two million dollars earmarked for the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO).
23. China has provided 1.6 million dollars in support of the development of a Civil Master Aviation Plans Course, which would provide training to States on how to integrate planning for pandemics within master aviation plans.
24. I would now like to turn to further key areas your States will need to address alongside these pandemic priorities. These include certifying the outstanding 11 percent of international airports in this region, completing the full regional implementation of the Common Aeronautical Virtual Private Network, and addressing your environmental responsibilities with respect to the CORSIA offsetting programme and your ICAO State Action Plans for aviation emissions reduction.
25. Lastly, ICAO encourages all APAC States to become more proactive in ICAO APAC Regional Office programmes and activities, all of which are continuing to be held through virtual platforms, so as to ensure that your civil aviation authorities are fully updated with the latest information.

26. As this may possibly be my last opportunity to address your States as ICAO Secretary General, I also wish to take a moment to express my tremendous gratitude for your partnership and strong support throughout these past six years, and acknowledge once again the many recent contributions of APAC States to enhancing the performance of international civil aviation.
  
27. It was a significant priority of mine to empower ICAO's Regional Offices when I took office as Secretary General, and it has been fulfilling to see how the APAC Regional Office Team have made such good use of their expanded roles and capacities to assist your countries' air transport achievements.
  
28. Thank you.