



**Remarks by the Council President
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the AeroDays2020 Berlin Aviation Summit**

(Virtual event, 24 Nov 2020)

Dear participants to Berlin AeroDays 2020, good afternoon from ICAO in Montreal!

The title of this Summit, Aviation for the Future – Change is now, is extremely timely. We are currently facing a huge change in aviation that will impact its future.

As we know, Aviation is global, and before the pandemic struck it, connected people, cultures, and businesses across the continents.

It is essential to many countries' access to regional and global markets, and these connections in turn enhance consumer choice, create jobs, and significantly stimulate air tourism and trade.

In appreciating that global connectivity and tourism are so fundamental to intercultural understanding, and to the peace and economic well-being of our world, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Guterres, went so far as to refer to them as one of the 'wonders of our world'.

Prior to COVID-19, close to 4.5 billion passengers and 60 million tonnes of freight were being carried by global commercial operators each year, on just under 40 million flights.

The sector has been responsible for providing meaningful employment and sustainable careers for over 65 million men and women worldwide, while contributing more than 2.7 trillion dollars to global GDP.

In 2019 our long-term traffic forecasts were showing that both passenger and freight traffic would more than double globally by 2035.

This forecast growth in operations held with it the promise of tremendous global economic potential, but with the early months of 2020, and the announcement of the COVID-19 pandemic, aviation suddenly found itself confronted by a new and unprecedented threat.

Unlike other infectious disease events we had previously confronted in aviation, COVID-19 restricted the international movement of people and goods to degrees never before witnessed with SARS or Ebola.

And as we each took measures to protect ourselves and our loved ones, passenger levels globally fell in March and April to just 10% of what they'd been just weeks before.

Quite obviously, this severe downturn led to some enormous and largely unpredictable impacts on aviation.

While air cargo operations are still being depended upon to support our rapidly increasing e-commerce activities, and to move vaccines and other perishable and high-value goods where societies most urgently need them, commercial airlines today are still facing dramatically reduced passenger load factors.

While in April passenger demand had fallen by 90%, ICAO can now estimate that 2020 will end with 60% fewer passengers overall, leading to operator losses globally of almost 400 billion dollars.

When COVID-19's pandemic status was confirmed by our colleagues at the WHO, ICAO responded very rapidly.

The most effective action was to establish an Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) to develop special so called 'Take-off' recovery guidelines for air transport with the objective to support the re-start and the recovery of air transport.

I wish to appreciate here the participation of industry groups and the WHO in the development of these provisions, among many other important public health and aviation and tourism organizations.

Among the important Recommendations issued by the CART, I wish to underscore its encouragement for governments to provide financial support to their aviation industries.

The CART guidelines are now being implemented by countries, and one bright spot we've seen relates to their recommendations on the establishment of public health corridors.

Among the international destinations where these corridors or travel bubbles are now being established, we are seeing the first indications of traveler confidence being restored.

Another factor we have noted is that areas with higher levels of intra-regional routes and operations are proving more resilient to the pandemic's effects.

A *Phase II* version of the ICAO recovery Take-off Guidelines was issued earlier this month.

Among its many revised provisions, it now recommends that countries assess their passenger medical testing options using the risk assessment tools in a new manual which ICAO has just issued for this purpose.

The objective is to accelerate every prudent means of restoring public confidence in air travel, including through the promotion of effective tests to replace quarantine requirements.

Governments reserve their sovereign right to address a public health threat with whatever measures necessary to protect the lives of their citizens, but at the same time they recognize how dire the situation may become if air travel is not reasonably ensured.

Covid-19 has dramatically changed our lives. Physical meetings have been replaced by virtual meetings. E-commerce has seen tremendous growth. On the one hand, according to international air transport forecasts, traffic should resume close to 2019 levels in 2022 and then should continue to grow substantially at the pre-pandemic rate. On the other hand, however, we cannot deny the effects that the COVID-19 experience will have on the future of business travel, for example more frequent use of technologies for meetings and events as we are doing today.

There is a strong global expectation that we will build back better post-pandemic, both in terms of our emissions and overall contributions to sustainability. I wish to recall that ICAO already has plans for CO₂ emission reductions. For example, as of this year CO₂ aviation emissions must have a neutral growth,

regardless of the increase in traffic. Of course, this year and next will generate less CO₂ emissions than expected, but as I said before, traffic will continue to increase in the following years. For this reason, we are working towards more ambitious goals.

In this regard, I very much welcome the recent commitments of some States and airlines to achieve net zero CO₂ emissions by 2050.

Decisions and actions such as these remind us of our unwavering determination as a sector to fulfill our common objectives, and of the constant need we face to adapt to new realities and technologies.

All of this will require significant amounts and new forms of aviation innovation going forward, whether to make air travel more resilient in the face of future pandemic threats, more environmentally sustainable thanks to new propulsion technologies, or to safely integrate the incredible new developments taking place in autonomous, sub orbital, and supersonic flight.

Artificial intelligence, blockchain, sustainable aviation fuels and many other innovative technologies will also be a big part of this evolution, and it will also require changes to how regulators and standards setters assess and adopt new innovations for global benefit.

To meet this challenge, the ICAO Council will establish a high-level Forum on innovation with industry leaders, and this will play an important role in how our community cooperates in the important years ahead.

This continued solidarity among aviation stakeholders will be significantly depended upon in the months and years ahead, and ICAO will look forward, as always, to the perspectives and best practices of European States, manufacturers, research centers and operators as we spread aviation's benefits to every corner of the world.

I wish to thank you very much for your attention and I wish you fruitful discussions at this Berlin AeroDays2020 Summit.

Thank you.