



**Keynote remarks by  
the Council President  
of the International Civil Aviation Organization,  
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,  
to the 2021 Hellenic Aviation Society Virtual General Assembly**

*(Virtual Event, 18 February 2021)*

*Dear members and participants in the 2021 Hellenic Aviation Society General Assembly,*

It is my great honour to return to the stage of the Hellenic Aviation Society, after three years, even if it is virtually.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Papatheodorou, President of the Hellenic Aviation Society, and to Dr. Kostas Iatrou, Director General of Hermes Air Transport and Honorary Member of this Board, for inviting me to this webinar and I look forward to the enriching exchanges we shall have today with the objective of advancing air transport.

Unfortunately, aviation's skies have never been as dark as we have seen over the past year.

The latest ICAO economic impact analysis of COVID-19 on civil aviation reveals that for the year 2020, global passenger traffic has fallen by 60 per cent, or 2.7 billion passengers, compared to 2019.

The precipitous decline has created severe liquidity strains on the aviation industry, risking its financial viability and threatening millions of jobs across the entire air transport value chain.

Facing this unprecedented situation, ICAO's primary objective has been to react and keep aviation on the path of restart and recovery. Just a few weeks after the appearance of COVID-19, the Council of ICAO established a Council Aviation Recovery Task Force, commonly known as the 'CART', composed of Council members and Industry and International Organization Representatives, that elaborated a set of principles and recommendations to bring as much international alignment as possible to ongoing national air transport response and recovery efforts.

It has also provided guidance on testing and cross-border risk mitigation measures, and during its upcoming third phase it will be seeking latest expert advice on the issues of test result validation and vaccine certification. On 12 March, the Council of ICAO will consider these latest proposals.

Such efforts are aiming to re-establish air connectivity in a safe, secure, and sustainable manner.

This must be an important consideration for governments at every level in this most challenging of economic environments, and States and industry must therefore continuously strive to improve their coordination on Public Health Corridors, internationally recognized testing and vaccine certifications, and ongoing vaccine distribution via air cargo worldwide.

At the same time, monitoring the implementation of these measures has been organized by ICAO based on global and regional roadmaps and through its COVID-19 monitoring platforms. Over 95% of ICAO Members States are providing us with real-time traffic and public health data through these platforms, greatly assisting our pandemic monitoring, analysis, and forecasting efforts.

Where re-establishing sustainability is concerned, this must be inclusive of: improving air transport resilience to future pandemic events; strengthening its economic viability in the face of the new normal; and assuring future air services are better aligned with the climate priorities of 21st century citizens.

How we achieve these objectives is the key question we face today as a global aviation community, and innovation will be critical to every strategic target and priority we establish together.

In this regard, ICAO was prescient in focusing on an innovation theme for international aviation for the 2020-2024 period. Innovation is advancing rapidly in all domains: safety, air navigation, security and environment. ICAO must keep pace and is consequently taking steps to re-evaluate the rule making process and to establish special new partnerships designed to accelerate its capacity to assess and enable new technologies and procedures. One of these steps is the establishment of a High-level Consultative Forum with industry on innovation. This will allow the Council of ICAO not only to keep pace with innovation, but to anticipate initiatives in support of innovation implementation.

One of the sectors where innovation will play a fundamental role in the short to medium term is CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction. New propulsion fuels and new engines can play a pivotal role in reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Electric engines are already a reality and can become widely used in the next ten to fifteen years. Similarly, Hydrogen engines can introduce a revolutionary innovation on aircraft propulsion. Of course, ICAO is not looking solely at innovation for CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction. I wish to recall that ICAO, as well as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), has been tasked with addressing aviation's impact on climate change at the global level. From the basket of measures, the most known is the market-based measure called CORSIA (Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation). The pilot phase of CORSIA was launched on 1 January 2021 and will last until 31 December 2023, during which time 88 ICAO Member States are implementing these measures. In 2026 CORSIA will be implemented by all ICAO States.

States have also asked ICAO to undertake a feasibility study aiming at identifying a long-term emissions goal for international civil aviation. This work has now begun in earnest. The Council of ICAO will submit a proposal in this regard to the next Assembly in 2022 and I am confident that decisions taken by the Assembly will ensure the continued sustainable development of international air transport. At the same time, I am very pleased to learn that several States, as well as several airlines, are working in order to reach the zero carbon emissions goal by 2050.

Concluding, let me recall that as we continue to work to align the global aviation pandemic response, we must not forget that air transport has consistently defied recessionary cycles precisely because air connectivity served as one of the most effective means of generating a return to growth and prosperity.

In this regard, I want to reiterate that our world still remains connected by aviation, and that it will continue to be long after the pandemic is behind us.

Our sector, despite confronting the most serious and disruptive global public health event in several generations, still moved 1.8 billion people last year, while ensuring that essential foods, medicines, and other urgent supplies and personnel were transported quickly and reliably to where the world needed them most.

ICAO has been proud to fulfil its important multilateral role during this challenging time, and we will continue our efforts to ensure a safe and harmonized COVID-19 recovery for global air transport.

Thank you.