



**Remarks
by the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the Ministerial Meeting on the Strengthening of the ECCAA and the
Safety and Security Oversight Systems of the Eastern Caribbean ICAO Contracting States**

(Virtual Event, 29 April 2021)

*Distinguished Ministers,
Permanent Secretariats,
Directors General,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

Let me begin by expressing how unfortunate it is to continue meeting virtually during this COVID-19 pandemic. I hope to have the opportunity to meet you in person once the conditions will allow.

It is ICAO's great honour to have you join us for this meeting, where we will discuss the important role of the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority (ECCAA) in assuring regional air transport safety and security performance.

Notwithstanding that aviation recovery is the priority for Governments, we must also consider the paramount importance of aviation safety and security.

Collaborative safety and security oversight approaches are critical for many countries in the world today, permitting them to cost-effectively pool their resources and share responsibilities.

Ultimately this regional oversight cooperation serves to strengthen local safety and security performance, and in so doing reassures millions of tourists and other international passengers that they can consider and explore Eastern Caribbean destinations with the same overall levels of confidence and trust that make air transport such an important force for economic growth the world over.

As the pandemic and recent tragic eruption on St. Vincent have once again demonstrated, the scope of aviation challenges faced by Small Islands States, together with the financial burdens associated with mitigating them, highlight the tremendous need for the effectiveness of regional air transport organizations and multinational entities in delivering affordable and sustainable solutions.

ICAO therefore congratulates the *Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States* (OECS) for their initiative and accomplishments supporting this regional collaborative approach. We commend OECS States' commitment and implementation of the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority or ECCAA as an excellent multi-State solution to achieve alignment with all current global policies, and complementing the ICAO *No Country Left Behind* goal to improve States' effective implementation of ICAO SARPs.

I also wish to commend in this context the North American, Central American and Caribbean Office Systemic Assistance Programme, which with the support of larger Champion States here is continuing to generate impressive results and serve as a prime example of regional solidarity and cooperation.

The ability of these cooperative solutions to augment and optimize the socio-economic benefits of safe and reliable air services in this region relies to a great extent on your political will, your governments' commitments, and on the continued dedication and leadership of local Civil Aviation Authorities.

In recognizing the progress being made by the North American, Central American and Caribbean Regional Office in this regard, let me please express the Council's gratitude for how your States have answered this call, and particularly among Eastern Caribbean States where a newly designated Director General will be providing fresh leadership at the ECCAA.

Our congratulations on your appointment, Mr. Whittier.

In unison with the collaboration now being forged through the ECCAA, we must also strongly rely on the commitments of each of its six ICAO Member States in assuring ECCAA's mission. This requires a competent national civil aviation authority staffed with qualified personnel and with sufficient financial resources.

At this time, when the pandemic is still very much a reality, this resourcing has been curtailed in some countries despite the fact that it is needed now more than ever to ensure continued global connectivity and operations.

While on the topic of the pandemic, please let me update those who may not be aware that last month the ICAO Council adopted the latest Phase III amendments to the Take-off guidance of its COVID-19 Aviation Recovery Task Force, or 'CART'.

Following the emergence of new virus variants, vaccine rollouts, and other innovations to battle COVID-19, the CART's latest work has targeted specific issues related to a State's multilayer risk management strategy.

With the ultimate objective of restoring public confidence in air travel, and getting passengers to fly again, the latest CART amendments prioritize safe and efficient global vaccine distribution, the facilitation of all-cargo air services, the exploration and realization of public health travel corridors, and standardized COVID-19 testing certificates for secure international use.

The CART recommendations also include new air crew vaccination considerations, safety priorities relating to sectoral recovery, and an encouragement for national civil aviation and transport officials to advocate more vigorously within their governments and ministries for air transport public health and economic priorities.

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 varying health, economic, and social priorities concerned.

These complex issues and others will be at the forefront of discussions at the High-Level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC) which ICAO has now scheduled for this October, and one which we expect ministers from every ICAO Member State to attend.

In concluding today, I wish to emphasize that the NACC region shows strong potential for recuperation and reactivation, and for serving as an example to other regions on how tourism can play an integral role in the sustainable economic recovery of States post-pandemic.

I also wish to express ICAO's continued concern and solidarity with the St. Vincent government, and with all other local governments now facing volcanic eruption-related challenges.

Please let me once again express the Council's deep appreciation to all six Eastern Caribbean ICAO Contracting States and their multi-State Civil Aviation Authority, and to the Champion States and others who supported your agreed solution on the enhancement of the ECCAA.

This effort is one of the NACC Regional Office's highest priorities and strongest commitments, and your continued support for these efforts will be important not only to regional air transport objectives, but to your societies' overall and sustainable economic well-being.

Thank you.