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**Keynote remarks
by the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the European Union Council Aviation Day Hybrid Conference
on a Fair, Green, and Digital Recovery**

(Virtual Event, 3 May 2021)

Good morning to the participants in the European Union Council Aviation Day Conference on a Fair, Green and Digital Recovery.

Special thanks to the Chairman of the Board of the Portuguese Civil Aviation Authority and my friend Luis Miguel Ribeiro for his kind invitation. This is a Hybrid Conference. Let's say that it is a small positive progress if compared with the still so many virtual meetings due COVID-19 pandemic.

I wish to start with the hope that you will forgive me if I record this speech rather than being live with you due to the substantial difference of time zones.

The Director General of DG MOVE, Mr. Henrik Hololei, will have surely provided you with insightful information and thoughts on the recovery of the sector during and after the pandemic. I wish to very briefly complement Mr. Hololei's remarks by sharing ICAO's analysis of the year 2020. ICAO's analysis reveals that global passenger traffic fell drastically by 60% or 2.7 billion, compared with 4.5 billion in 2019. This brings global air travel totals back to 2003 levels.

Resulting from the plunge in air traffic, airline financial losses is estimated to reach USD 370 billion, with Asia/Pacific accounting the biggest losses by 32%, followed by Europe (27%) and North America (24%). Airports and ANSPs are estimated to have lost USD 115 billion and USD 13 billion, respectively.

As you know, the ICAO Council reacted immediately to the WHO's declaration of a global pandemic by establishing the CART Task Force and has adopted a series of recommendations for Member States aimed at supporting air transport recovery.

Among them, I wish to take the opportunity today to recall the recommendations and guidance supporting the creation of public health travel corridors.

Europe has already implemented the same risk management strategies to maintain open air routes based on mutually-recognized public health measures. In this regard, I wish to once more encourage Governments to consider the same risk management strategies in order to establish public health corridors with third Countries.

The success of air transport recovery measures will largely depend on national decision-

makers taking fuller account of air transport's role as an enabler and multiplier of economic resilience and recovery.

For this reason, ICAO has decided to convene a High-Level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC) this October, inviting Ministers to discuss and to adopt a Declaration in support of aviation recovery.

However, notwithstanding its severity, the COVID-19 pandemic provides aviation with an incredible opportunity for comprehensive sectoral evolution.

Much of that evolution is focused today around dramatic innovations enabling greener operations, and on increasing the adoption of digital solutions to enable a paperless and healthier contact-free travel experience which is both more secure and less obtrusive.

The sheer scale of the pandemic's impacts has also permitted airlines, airports, and other aviation stakeholders to consider bolder modernization and fleet renewal strategies, stronger emissions commitments, and even net zero targets for their overall operations within just the next three decades.

These trends and commitments highlight that, as the pandemic subsides, and as aviation begins to slowly reconnect us to the world, the global air transport network will be managing increasingly greener aircraft, and improving its environmental sustainability, more consistently and dramatically than ever before.

While the pandemic has been an accelerator of these types of trends, it should not be mistaken as their instigator.

Even before COVID-19 struck, aviation innovation was already ushering in an entirely new era of flight through the emergence of remotely- or autonomously controlled drones and other unmanned aircraft systems, research into greener propulsion and airframe design, and the exploration of new forms of urban air mobility and airspace management.

And from an even longer historical perspective, we can also appreciate how modern commercial aircraft were already 70% quieter and 80% more fuel efficient than the first jets to enter service, and that aviation's prioritization of higher fuel efficiency was therefore a defining aspect of its continuous modernization and innovation focus.

These innovations also require ICAO to be aware of new needs and challenges in order to keep pace with the Industry. For this reason, the Council recently decided to establish a High Level Consultative Forum with the Industry that will facilitate dialogue at a strategic level.

With regard to CO₂ aviation emissions reduction, ICAO had previously adopted in 2013 a collective sectoral goal of 2020 carbon neutral growth for international flights. ICAO States are pursuing that goal today through ICAO standards and policies focused around the promotion and adoption of new technologies, the increased refining and distribution of sustainable aviation fuels, efficiency improvements through better designed operations and procedures, and most recently CORSIA – the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation. In this latter regard, I wish to underline that ICAO is proceeding very well with its implementation. For example, just last month the Council adopted new sustainability criteria for CORSIA eligible aviation fuels.

In 2019, the 40th session of the ICAO also requested the Council to work over this current triennium on the feasibility of a long-term global aspirational goal for international aviation (LTAG).

This work is ongoing and we intend to submit a robust proposal to the 41st Assembly in 2022. But it's also important to acknowledge that this and other targets are part of a much larger and truly worldwide movement today to usher in a greener and more sustainable future for humanity.

Europe remains a key global leader on the environment, and we are seeing both public- and private-sector leadership at work in this region today toward greener flights and airports.

In concluding today, I wish to emphasize that ICAO is continuing to engage with all stakeholders to facilitate the development and accelerated implementation of green initiatives under the ICAO Coalition for Sustainable Aviation.

Our upcoming 2021 Stocktaking event will provide an important forum for green innovators to explore disruptive technologies that will shape the future of aviation, and I would encourage anyone with an interest in green innovations to join us for this event beginning 31 August.

Lastly I wish to stress that while each of us has the right and responsibility to make decisions to reduce our personal carbon footprint, it's also beholden on responsible leaders to consider actions that are comprehensive and informed.

In air transport more specifically, this onus requires us to address the sustainability of international flight in a manner which does not disconnect a diverse and beautiful world which generations have worked so hard to bring together.

This priority is of clear importance to landlocked and small island states, many of which have developing-nation status and look to their international air connectivity as an economic lifeline.

But in other types of countries as well, international air connections generate critical local revenues that improve general prosperity, augment opportunity, and ultimately are helping governments to achieve 15 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals under Agenda 2030.

While international flights pre-pandemic accounted for just under two per cent of the greenhouse gas emissions we collectively produce, as aviation leaders we understood our sector would continue to grow, and that this figure would grow along with it if not effectively addressed.

It's therefore our duty today to recall in this context the incredible spirit of connectivity and co-operation that led to humanity establishing the air transport network to begin with, and to safeguard its immensely positive benefits for our world by addressing its environmental sustainability with conviction, perspective, and ultimately, success.

Thank you.