



**Keynote speech by Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the 33rd Plenary Session of the
African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC)**

(1 December 2021, Kigali, Rwanda)

His Excellency, President of the Republic of Rwanda, Mr. Paul Kagame,

Honourable Minister of Infrastructure of Rwanda, Mr. Claver Gatete,

Honourable Minister of Roads and Air Transport of Togo, Mr. Affoh Atcha-Dedji,

The Representative of the African Union Commission,

President and Secretary General of AFCAC,

African Directors-General of Civil Aviation,

Esteemed friends and colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to address this 33rd Plenary Session of the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) in the beautiful city of Kigali, and the country of a thousand hills which is Rwanda.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to AFCAC for the kind invitation to join this important meeting, and appreciate here as well the significant commitment and initiative on behalf of the Government of Rwanda for hosting what I understand to be the very first aviation meeting on the continent in some time which includes in-person participation.

ICAO is beginning to see these small signs of sectoral and societal recovery emerging all over the world, and we are vigorously encouraging Member States to use extensively the ICAO Council's Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) recommendations to support international air transport recovery and, consequently, to reconnect Countries more quickly and return to greater prosperity.

I would like to emphasize that these CART recommendations are applicable to Omicron, the new COVID-19 variant of concern.

In fact, CART, together with the African Union High-level Task Force for Recovery of Aviation in Africa, have made tremendous efforts since the onset of COVID-19 to ensure effective, coherent and coordinated response and recovery measures in international air transport.

The solidarity contributing to our joint progress in these efforts was also clearly on display at ICAO a few weeks ago, when we concluded an intensive nine days of multilateralism aimed at global air transport recovery at our High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC).

The Ministerial Sessions of the High-level Conference provided an important opportunity for consensus on some current and key priorities.

In their discussions, which included also latest perspectives from the many industry groups and international organizations, Ministers at the HLCC determined that while vaccination should not be a precondition for travel, it should be leveraged at every prudent opportunity to safely facilitate international mobility.

They also emphasized the need to refine border risk management approaches on the basis of the latest scientific evidence, and highlighted the need to reinforce the global network against future threats.

Ministers also stressed that aviation must become more flexible and adaptive in response to the re-shaped economies, and rapidly evolving societal and consumer expectations which will confront it during the post-pandemic period, recognizing that the climate change emergency is paramount among these concerns.

The Technical Streams at the HLCC were an important complement to the ministerial discussions, and their outcomes stressed the need for greater cooperation on strategic planning to improve aviation safety and facilitation performance.

Technical conclusions also highlighted the relevance of ICAO's Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA) mechanism to improving cross-sectorial collaboration on future infectious disease resilience, as well as to augment public health and air transport coordination more broadly. CAPSCA is a voluntary cross-sectorial, multi-organizational collaboration programme managed by the International ICAO with support from the World Health Organization (WHO) aimed at increasing global preparedness to mitigate and manage the effects of public health events on civil aviation.

A further important outcome concerned the need to aggressively leverage digital innovations and data sharing to achieve seamless and contactless processes, and to promote more efficient global access to mutually-recognized and ICAO VDS-secured health certifications.

The Declaration which formalized the outcomes of the High-level conference provides an important foundation for renewed confidence and optimism as we work together to reconnect the world. We must now take advantage of that foundation and build upon it to amplify and accelerate emerging positive trends for national and global benefit.

For these outcomes to be realistic and attainable, the commitments which countries have made to assure near-term financial and economic support for their air industries and regulators cannot be neglected. Vital operations must be sustained, and normal operations fully restored, if air transport is to be able to fulfill its historic role in returning the world to prosperity.

Bringing a complex global network back to full capacity is an enormous undertaking, and even more so in Africa given the size and diversity of this wonderful continent.

I wish to reassure you that ICAO and its member States have also clearly recognized the need for determined assistance and capacity-building as a key element of all objectives relating to a safe recovery of air transport and building-back better, and that the ICAO Council's principle of leaving no country behind will continue to guide us in prioritizing and actioning this work.

While recovery is now underway, we cannot neglect that there remain many and significant challenges to its fruition. This highlights the important role which will need to be played by Africa's regional organizations and economic communities.

Building back better is a monumental team effort, and here in Africa for example it will require the continuous joint efforts of States and aviation stakeholders to advance the objectives and work undertaken on the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Declaration, in addition to the African Union's flagship projects to realize the Single African Air Transport Market and African Continental Free Trade Area (SAATM and AfCTA).

In this regard, in addition to the ICAO/AFCAC Memorandum of Cooperation signed in 2010, the Project Implementation Agreement (PIA) supported by the African Development Fund signed early this year provides them with a suitable framework for collaboration to help accelerate the implementation of the SAATM.

In concluding today, I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation for the valuable contributions made by AFCAC and its Member States during the High-level Conference on COVID-19, and especially regarding African Regional Safety Oversight Organizations (RSOOs) and the role they have been playing during the COVID crisis.

These collaborative mechanisms for safety oversight deliver tremendous benefits and economies of scale.

They also enable and expand the regulatory and oversight capacities of their participating States, and ease personnel resource demands in today's challenging environment of continuously emerging technologies.

This new era of innovation also brings to mind that the ICAO Global Air Navigation Plan permits and encourages States and Regions to modernize by leapfrogging legacy technologies, and that the adaptable performance roadmaps established under its Aviation System Block Upgrades (ASBU) framework will guide you in those efforts.

Moving forward, ICAO remains committed to supporting the implementation of the Declaration and Framework for a Plan of Action for Development of Aviation Infrastructure in Africa, under the ICAO Comprehensive Regional Implementation Plan for Aviation Safety in Africa (AFI Plan), in addition to other existing and anticipated regional initiatives.

The ICAO Council has also recently made its voice clear on the fact that myself and the Secretary General must continue to be very actively engaged at the highest levels with African States, as they continue to pursue progress on safety deficiencies and the effective implementation of the AFI SECFAL Plan.

In these and all other areas we must also continue to strive to eliminate duplication of efforts and improve ICAO compliance, including with respect to our joint efforts to support accelerated recovery and the development of air transport and tourism, per the objectives laid out in the Sal Declaration.

A great deal of work remains ahead of us before we can achieve full recovery, and ICAO's upcoming 41st Assembly next September will provide an important opportunity to review our latest results and drive more ambitious outcomes.

The discussions to be conducted at this AFCAC Plenary session can help to inform and inspire this next stage in the process of global recovery, and I look forward to the enriching exchanges planned over the next three days.

Thank you.

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