



**Address by the Council President of the  
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)  
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano  
to the Symposium on Assistance  
to Aircraft Accident Victims and their Families**

*(Pre-recorded message, 1 December 2021)*

It's an honour for me to address this and first-ever ICAO Symposium on Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims and their Families and I very much regret not being able to be with you in person as a result of an unforeseen regional commitment. Although I could not be there, ICAO is very well represented by its Secretary General, Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar whose physical presence with you today is a testimony to the level of commitment that ICAO has made to this important objective.

As we begin this symposium today, I wish to extend ICAO's sincere sympathy to all those who have suffered distress and loss as a result of an aircraft accident. As an Organization whose top priority is safety, ONE fatal aircraft accident is ONE too many. Respect for victims of civil aviation accidents and the mental, physical and spiritual well-being of their families is of paramount importance to ICAO. Consequently, ICAO works diligently to ensure that these needs are considered and accommodated by its member States.

As part of its work in this area, I wish to recall that the ICAO Council held an informal meeting with the *Air Crash Victims' Families' Federation International* or ACVFFI on 10 May 2021 to raise awareness of ICAO's governing body of ICAO's current activities on assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families and to review areas where enhanced support was needed.

As the global agency governing civil aviation, ICAO's core function is to support a safe, secure and sustainable development of international air transport.

Safety is always paramount among ICAO's priorities, and its outcomes require a monumental team effort involving not only the global standards and national regulators, but also pilot first responders, airline and airport safety teams, air traffic controllers and air navigation specialists, aircraft designers and manufacturers, and the maintenance and other service providers who keep aircraft and infrastructure fully operational.

ICAO Member States are currently working toward ambitious global safety targets, in tandem with the strengthening of their regulatory capacities, while pursuing a range of programmes and targets relevant to current core areas of global aviation safety planning, oversight, and risk mitigation.

While global efforts continue to reinforce aviation's reputation as the safest form of travel, we are here today in recognition of the fact that despite all of ICAO's Standards, and the millions of people dedicated to keeping flying safe and secure on a daily basis, no system is perfect.

And we must also recognize that, in light of the very nature of modern air transport, unforeseen and serious accidents in our sector will often result in fatalities.

While countries and ICAO are not directly engaged in the day-to-day operations from which accidents derive, we can and do recognize the solemn responsibility to assure that timely and comprehensive information, care, and resources are provided to accident victims and their loved ones.

Apart from the work already undertaken to address the needs of aircraft accident victims and their families with a specific policy, and a new ICAO Manual, ICAO is also currently developing a Training Course in this area to help countries develop or refine appropriate family assistance legislation, regulations, policy, and plans.

This issue was also recently addressed by the ICAO Facilitation Panel, and it has subsequently recommended that associated priorities be enshrined not only in a policy, but indeed a full ICAO Standard. This would place a more formal compliance obligation on States to develop effective victim support frameworks.

In a parallel development, the ministers participating at ICAO's recently-concluded High-level Conference on COVID-19 have addressed further calls to States and airlines to take action on this issue as a matter of priority.

Lastly, I wish to inform you that the ICAO Council has very recently approved the establishment of 20 February as a new international day for commemoration of the lives which have been lost due to air accidents, and for the continuing promotion of the need to establish and refine the support your community expects and deserves.

It's ICAO's hope that the discussions and presentations here over the coming days will provide you with excellent opportunities to take account of current progress being achieved in enhancing assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families, and to consider further activities and actions which could benefit future progress.

In concluding, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the Air Crash Victims' Families' Federation International, and ICAO's Council Representative from Spain, Mr. Victor Aguado, for their invaluable dedication and contributions to assuring this priority has received the international attention it is due.

I would also express my great appreciation and thanks to the Government of Spain and the Regional Government of Gran Canaria, for hosting this event.

I very much look forward to your outcomes and conclusions, and wish you a very engaging and productive symposium.

Thank you.