



**Address by the Council President
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the XXIV Ordinary Assembly of the
Latin American Civil Aviation Commission (LACAC)**

(Montevideo, Uruguay, 23 March 2022)

Good afternoon,

I am honoured to join you here for this 24th Assembly of the Latin American Civil Aviation Commission (LACAC), and to help underscore the importance of the close and effective cooperation being realized by our Organizations.

I wish to thank the President of LACAC, Mr. Armando Daniel, for inviting me here today and to Mr. Jaime Binder, for conveying my invitation to this Assembly on behalf of President Daniel and your Executive Committee.

I also extend my sincere appreciation to the government of Uruguay, both for this lovely venue and the very gracious hospitality it has provided us.

As you know, COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted air transport. It is sufficient to recall that worldwide passenger traffic collapsed in 2020 to levels not seen since 2003.

After almost two years of virtual meetings, it is a real pleasure to restart meetings in person. Thanks to the effective health measures put in place, we can begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Sadly, while we are slowly recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, the tragic events unfolding in Ukraine outline even potentially more dramatic worldwide economic and social consequences including, of course, for our sector.

However, remaining on the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, despite last year's slight growth reflecting a positive sign of recovery and improvement, however, we cannot lose sight of the fact that 2021 totals were still 40% lower than they were pre-pandemic.

This means that airlines globally still had to confront massive losses of over 324 billion dollars in gross passenger operating revenue.

Looking to the Latin American and Caribbean region more specifically, traffic here has recovered more robustly than other world regions, rising from a 58% decline in 2020, to just a 35% decline in 2021.

As a result, the share of this region's international passenger traffic increased from 6 per cent in 2019 to 10 percent in 2021.

Most encouragingly of all, it is currently being projected to recover to over 90 per cent of the pre-crisis level by the end of 2022.

Current recovery successes in Latin and South America can be attributed in part to the recommendations issued by the ICAO Council's Aviation Recovery Task Force, or CART, but mainly to the exemplary government and industry cooperation which was established to support their effective implementation.

I also wish to underscore here as well the important leadership of LACAC in driving the establishment of the Air Cargo Agreement on Seventh Freedom Traffic rights, which has played such an important part in the overall Pan-American strategy for response and recovery.

The memorandum of understanding supporting this initiative, which has been signed by ten LACAC member States, is aligned with CART recommendation 16, which encourages the temporary lifting of restrictions to air cargo operations, including but not limited to, granting extra-bilateral rights, in particular for all-cargo services.

Much of this regional success can be attributed to the exemplary levels of international cooperation that Latin and South American aviation have been benefitting from for many years now.

I would recall for example the memorandum of understanding signed by LACAC and ICAO in 1998 to establish what has become a very highly successful regional safety oversight organization, or SRVSOP.

Benefitting from a tremendous level of regional commitment and buy-in, this initiative has provided a very effective and sustainable solution for enhancing aviation safety, helping SRVSOP member States to attain the highest effective implementation levels in the world.

This brings to mind the closely aligned objectives and successes of other regional safety oversight organizations, such as the Caribbean Aviation Safety and Security Oversight System, and the Central American Agency for Aviation Safety.

ICAO is also encouraged to hear about the successes achieved following the establishment of the Accident Investigation Regional Cooperation Mechanism of South America. As we appreciate this progress, we must also clearly recognize that for these mechanisms to continue to fulfil their mandates stable funding and staff resources are essential.

Looking ahead, as recovery proceeds and regional growth is once again placed on a more predictable course, there will be a pressing need for infrastructure development and modernization, and to assure that aviation development remains a priority in national development plans.

This also points to the need for States to take pragmatic measures to build transparent, stable and predictable investment climates to support aviation development, for example, by engaging multiple-stakeholders as global aviation partners.

The Declaration which resulted from the 4th ICAO World Aviation Forum, which was hosted by Brazil in Fortaleza, in 2018, reflected these and other objectives in a vision which is still inspiring Pan-American aviation development across a wide range of aligned priorities.

While many of these had to be set aside to address the pandemic crisis, the benefits they can deliver on the basis of enhanced connectivity through government and industry commitment will still be guiding the growth of air transport in this region for many decades to come.

Pan-American States must therefore continue to work to assure that air transport is available, affordable, seamless and sustainable for all users.

In addition, State national development plans, many of which are now once again being reviewed and adjusted as the pandemic recovery accelerates, must clearly prioritize and integrate civil aviation needs and outcomes with those of other economic and transport sectors.

Aviation safety and security effectiveness is a key foundation of modern air transport, and critical to these development objectives.

To assure we maintain our excellent record in these areas, Pan-American States and industry must systematically adopt civil aviation safety improvement measures, progressively reducing fatal accidents, and at the same time incorporate a robust aviation security culture into the training and operations of all civil aviation entities and organizations.

Security and facilitation is also a critical area of current and future priority in terms of assuring the resilience of this sector against future pandemic events, and ICAO has undertaken significant and related capacity building work in the field of travel documents and border management in the LACAC region in the past months.

This work includes the development of a cost-benefit analysis tool for investment in Automated Border Control systems that is tailored to this region, and which has already been deployed on airport projects in the Dominican Republic and Panama.

LACAC States are encouraged to take advantage of the momentum being provided by our capacity building work, and to build upon some promising recent developments such as the recent implementation of a new electronic passport in Mexico, and the near-term plans for a similar implementation in Costa Rica.

I would also encourage LACAC States to assume a very active role in the Innovation Programme of ICAO, and also with respect to the Cybersecurity Action Plan.

With regard to environment, and in particular to Climate Change, as you may recall, UN Secretary General Guterres' declared a 'code red' emergency for environmental action by industries and societies in response to the latest findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change .

ICAO member States are faced with the reality that when air transport recovers, and growth resumes to pre-pandemic levels, aviation stands to become one of the fastest growing sources of man-made emissions unless more rapid and effective action is taken.

ICAO is working very hard on a proposal of Long Term Aspirational Goal for Aviation emissions to be discussed at the forthcoming 41st ICAO Assembly. I therefore encourage all LACAC members to participate in the ICAO high level conference on the new Long Term Aspirational Goal for aviation emissions taking place in July.

This event is critical to the upcoming considerations of the ICAO Council in terms the LTAG proposals to be presented to the 41st Assembly this September.

ICAO has been prioritizing technological and energy innovation as the key drivers for aviation's more sustainable future. I would therefore recommend that LACAC States begin to prioritize the development and deployment of Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF), for which there is some immense potential in this region.

Another key objective should be to encourage more regional States and operators to adopt Net-Zero 2050 targets, consistent with recent industry-wide trends.

Emissions offsetting under CORSIA will play an important supporting role in keeping overall emissions impacts mitigated in the meantime, and I am pleased to share with you that 107 States are now voluntarily participating in CORSIA, including nine States from LACAC.

I encourage more States to announce their voluntary participation this year, which will enhance the environmental integrity of the scheme and the leadership of our sector in this area.

I would lastly like to commend LACAC Member States for their excellent progress towards the preparation of their State Action Plans to reduce aviation CO₂ emissions, with 22 LACAC States now having developed and submitted their plans to ICAO.

The State Action Plan initiative provides an opportunity to establish and showcase strategies to reduce aviation emissions, and they should continue to be updated to reflect voluntary contributions of Member States to the ICAO global aspirational goals.

In closing now let me please reiterate that ICAO and LACAC have enjoyed a very close, cooperative, and mutually-beneficial relationship. Over the years, this relationship has been strengthened by the excellent work of the Council Representatives from your region who ensure that the interests of Latin American aviation are very well represented in the global forum and whose efforts support the Organization in achieving its strategic objectives.

Together we have taken great strides and made significant improvements to Latin American civil aviation, to the benefit of all of your societies and economies.

Going forward, ICAO will be looking forward to LACAC's active participation in the 41st Assembly this September, with regard to the priorities I have highlighted here today, and others which Secretary General Salazar will share later in this event.

I very much look forward to your discussions, and wish you all a very productive 24th Assembly.

Thank you.