



**Keynote address by
the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the 2022 Future Aviation Forum**

(Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 9 May 2022)

Your Excellency Minister Saleh bin Nasser bin Alali Aljasser,
Honorable Ministers,
Authorities,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is wonderful to be here in Riyadh this week and I wish to begin today by expressing my gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the very kind invitation to join the very illustrious range of participants present with us for this important event.

Like many of you, I recognize the fact that we are here together, in person as a very positive sign that more optimistic horizons lie ahead for global aviation. After the dramatic decrease in traffic in 2020, and the start of recovery in 2021, ICAO's current outlook indicates a continued recovery in 2022. Global passenger traffic is projected to reach approximately 75 percent of the pre-pandemic level by the end of this year. That means, however, still 1.1 billion passengers less than in 2019.

Looking ahead, we must consider the lessons learned during the acute phase of the pandemic.

On that basis, we must build aviation back better and more resilient. Should a similar crisis reoccur, governments, together with industry, will have to take more coordinated action to stabilize and support continued air connectivity. It will also require more concerted efforts in taking measures to protect citizens with regard to border closures, subsidies or other economic support measures, and health protection requirements. Enhanced resilience will also entail advancing liberalization efforts for example in cargo.

Enhanced resilience will also mean providing Member States with an enhanced regulatory framework established by Annex 9 to the Chicago Convention on Facilitation. This must be a cornerstone of our resilience to future challenges from public health emergencies and communicable disease outbreaks.

The recent adoption by the ICAO Council of new and revised Annex 9 provisions relating to public health is an excellent start, and closer cooperation with the World Health Organization will continue to be critical.

Effective coordination between public health and aviation authorities at the national and international levels is essential to all related outcomes in this domain, and ICAO is accordingly an important contributor to the WHO's work on the evolution of the *International Health Regulations*, *Smart Vaccination Credentials*, and *Trust Frameworks for International Health Credentials*.

This aligns well with our similar contributions to the G20's efforts on technical systems to improve international health proof verification capabilities.

The communication of health-related information between States also brings to mind the privacy and data protection laws of States.

ICAO's extensive experience in dealing with encoding personal information into a secure document, notably the e-passport, is very relevant here, and we have been bringing this knowledge and experience to bear during the pandemic with the development of the ICAO standard called VDS.

Using the Passport Key Directory or PKD framework, States already issuing electronic travel documents have been able to issue digital health credentials more quickly, and those already participating in the PKD can verify them more efficiently.

Perhaps the most fundamental development supporting seamless and contactless air travel will be the deployment of digitized travel documents.

ICAO has developed Digital Travel Credentials (DTC) specifications to encourage this progress, building on pre-existing technology frameworks already in place for the issuance and inspection of today's passports.

Introducing Digital Travel Credentials into the travel continuum will completely reform many passenger processes, allowing for the contactless presentation of biographic and biometric data, even remotely and in advance of travel, and using the existing security backbone of the physical ePassport.

Digital credentials can also facilitate the deployment of facial recognition solutions, opening up further possibilities for an overall future passenger experience which is more convenient and comfortable for travellers, and more efficient and secure for State border authorities and industry operators.

To build back better international aviation will need to address climate change challenges as a matter of urgency. I take the opportunity in that regard, to highlight the recent exemplary work of Saudi Arabia to address the climate change challenge and promote sustainability under the Saudi Green Initiative. The ambitious environmental targets laid out in this Initiative are a testimony to Saudi Arabia's strong commitment to this global issue.

UN Secretary General Guterres has called for all means of transport to realize net-zero emissions by 2050, and aviation operators have now answered his call with detailed plans and aggressive targets.

Aircraft today are 80% more fuel efficient than aircraft flying in the '60s. Technological advances will continue to support CO₂ emission reduction. Much of our sector's near-term emissions response will rely on lower-carbon and Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF), more efficient operations and flow management, and the global offsetting being managed under CORSIA.

But ultimately aircraft have to decarbonize, and that means moving entirely to zero emission propulsion solutions.

States are poised to discuss their Long Term Aspirational Goal for aviation emissions at ICAO's 41st Assembly this fall, and we look forward to very high levels of environmental leadership and engagement in doing so.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In concluding today during such challenging times for our world, I wish to emphasize that whatever the future of International Civil Aviation will look like, it will continue to be guided by the Chicago Convention, and most especially by the principles set forth in the Convention's Preamble which state that:

"The future development of international civil aviation can greatly help to create and preserve friendship and understanding among the nations and peoples of the world". And it can effectively "promote that cooperation between nations and peoples upon which the peace of the world depends".

International Air Transport was established as a universal bridge builder - building bridges between nations and continents, between cultures and traditions, between individuals and communities.

And it is that very spirit of cooperation that has guided its glorious past that will also ensure its remarkable future.

Thank you