



**Opening remarks by
the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the ACI World Annual General Assembly**

(Barcelona, Spain, 27 June 2023)

*Excellencies,
Distinguished friends and colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

Please let me thank ACI Director General Mr. Luis Felipe de Oliveira for the kind invitation to address this year's Assembly. Thank you very much also to the Director General of ACI Europe, Olivier Jankovec, for co-hosting this important event.

As the UN specialized agency whose mission is to support a safe, secure, efficient and sustainable development of international air transport, ICAO sets standards and adopts policies and provides implementation oversight and support to its member States.

To these aims, a close cooperation with the Industry is essential and why ACI's engagement in several ICAO activities, some of which I will share in a few moments is so important.

In this regard, I wish to underscore a formidable example of effective cooperation between ICAO and ACI. That is, the intensive collaboration and the great contribution provided by ACI World to the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force, well known as CART, during COVID-19.

The ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force, established just a few days after the pandemic status was declared by the World Health Organization in March 2020, was a central component of the air transport immediate response on a global scale. In fact, what made the CART particularly unique and effective was the involvement of not only ICAO Member States but also a large scope of relevant stakeholders. On this point, I must thank ACI for its active participation and invaluable contributions.

The work performed through the CART has greatly contributed to the realization of a more resilient aviation system.

COVID-19 lessons are well learned and ICAO is working with the World Health Organization and other partners in order to establish mechanisms that would better prepare us to face new similar crises. In fact, the ICAO Assembly held last October directed ICAO to strengthen its crisis management capacity, including by establishing a crisis response framework and mechanism based on experienced gained during the COVID-19 crisis.

At this important gathering, I would be remiss not to mention aviation decarbonization.

As you know last Assembly ICAO member States adopted an historic decision to decarbonize air transport by 2050. This decision is also referred to as the adoption of the “Long Term Aspirational Goal”.

This decision follows the industry’s strong commitment in this regard and I wish to applaud ACI for being such an active part of this pledge.

Aviation decarbonization will be reached through the implementation of the so-called basket of measures: technology, more efficient air navigation routes, Sustainable Aviation Fuels or SAFs, including Low Carbon Aviation Fuels, and offsetting through market measures.

We know that SAFs and Low Carbon Aviation Fuels will play the main role in the short-medium term. Between 55% and 60% of CO₂ emission reduction in 2050 will be reached through SAFs and Low Carbon Aviation Fuels.

Consequently, the short term objective is to deploy the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuels, making it both affordable and accessible.

ICAO is working very hard with fuel producers, institutional and private investors to make this happen particularly by fostering international partnerships and cooperation with the energy and financial sectors to accelerate much-needed investment in this area.

Investments require a clear regulatory global framework in order to provide certainty.

For this reason, ICAO has called a High-Level Conference on Civil Aviation Alternative Fuels (CAAF/3), late November in Dubai, just ahead COP/28, with the objective to adopt a climate change framework that would provide States, Aviation Stakeholders, Fuel Producers and Investors with clear perspectives. The Conference’s outcome will be pivotal to a global framework for aviation fuels, adding to the reliability and predictability of investments in SAF projects. We know that there is a strong willingness of States to move forward on the establishment of a global framework as a means to unlock investments for production capacity.

We are also helping countries to build local capacities and foster international contacts to optimize their sustainable aviation fuel potential through our ACT-SAF programme, an Assistance and Capacity Building Programme.

To date, more than 120 States and International Organizations are now very actively participating in this initiative.

Airports of course are playing and will continue to play a fundamental role in decarbonization.

For example, ACI’s Airport Carbon Accreditation program has demonstrated the strong engagement of airports worldwide.

But we must recognize that over the next years airports will have to play a significant role in support of SAF accessibility.

ACI World has been very proactive in this area as evidenced by its initiative in releasing one of the first sustainable fuel studies last year in conjunction with the Aerospace Technology Institute (ATI).

ICAO foresees the coexistence of kerosene, sustainable aviation fuels, electricity, and hydrogen powered flights over the next few decades, powering both traditional and new types of aircraft featuring wider wingspans or even blended wing designs to improve efficiency.

This means that airports will need to be ready to support such innovations. They will need to be prepared to accommodate new aircraft, autonomous ground vehicles, and new air urban mobility.

As we consider aviation's sustainable development, we must recall our top priority – safety.

ICAO and ACI collaborate effectively in the area of runway safety.

ACI's partnership on runway safety has been fundamental to the development and roll out of the ICAO Global Reporting Format (GRF), a globally harmonized methodology for runway surface condition assessment and reporting that we have been working closely together to successfully implement, everywhere in the world.

Runway excursions have consistently featured among our sector's highest safety risks in consecutive ICAO Safety Reports, and efficient collaboration among governments and industry is essential to mitigating them.

Another safety area which ICAO is now consulting countries on concerns new provisions for Obstacle Limitation Surfaces (OLS).

This work focuses on better protecting airspace around aerodromes, taking into account modern aircraft performance and the needs of both aeronautical and non-aeronautical communities.

A further airport evolution which operators and States must realize together concerns the adoption of the latest in digital and satellite-based capabilities to enable much more efficiently managed 21st Century airspace.

This would include, for example, building out from a Total Airport Management (TAM) concept which takes into account:

- The anticipated capacity and efficiency impacts from advanced air mobility (AAM) and vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) operations at vertiports;
- Accommodating and integrating new aircraft such as remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS);
- And electric and hydrogen-powered aircraft requirements.

ICAO has also published guidance material on airport collaborative decision making (A-CDM) in its *Manual on Collaborative Air Traffic Flow Management* (Doc 9971), and is initiating work with the support of States and industry partners, including ACI, on the next evolution of these approaches.

This envisions the integration of all facets of the airport system, including airside, landside, and facilitation practices, so as to optimize all available capacity and greatly improve the overall passenger experience.

The increasing digitalization and integration of air transport systems and processes highlights as well why cybersecurity is such an important shared priority moving forward.

It is paramount that we pursue infrastructure modernization on the basis of security by design principles to reduce all potential vulnerabilities and gaps between the numerous stakeholders in air transport.

ACI has been a partner in addressing this topic for more than 10 years now, given that airports sit in the center of this operational landscape, with digital links to airlines, air navigation service providers, law enforcement, customs, maintenance organizations, and others.

Its continuing input into ICAO's work on aviation cybersecurity is essential to realizing a robust, holistic, and harmonized framework for international civil aviation as a whole.

In parallel to considerations for safety, security, capacity, and sustainability, there is a critical economic component to all of these evolutions we are discussing.

Investment in airport infrastructure is critical not only to support the future of the aviation system, but also the global economy that relies so directly upon it.

Many developing States rely on their international travel and tourism potential to attract foreign spending and investment, develop new revenue streams and more resilient tax bases, and invest in and achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

ICAO is therefore deeply appreciative of ACI's engagement in ICAO's related panels and for its contributions towards ensuring that ICAO's global policies and guidance materials are continuously updated and fit for the future.

Before concluding, I wish to summarize today by recognizing that airports must play a proactive role in driving the clean energy transition in air transport and achieving sustainability in this sector.

As we have emphasized time and time again, air transport will have to be more resilient in the face of potential crises, it will have to be strongly engaged in the fight against climate change, and, it must continue to develop so that no country is left behind.

ICAO is fully committed in this regard.

This Assembly provides a valuable platform for us to build from our strengths, exchange ideas, and identify new opportunities, and I will look forward to its outcomes and wish everyone a very productive event.

Thank you for your attention.