



**Opening address by
the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the 2023 ICAO Air Services Negotiation (ICAN) Event**

(Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 3 December 2023)

*Eminent Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

Welcome to ICAN 2023.

This is the second time that we've had the very good fortune to be hosted for these negotiations by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and I wish to begin today by expressing ICAO's deepest appreciation for its generosity and assistance in providing us with such excellent facilities here in beautiful Riyadh.

As many of you are already aware, ICAN events provide States and industry with a unique opportunity to conduct multiple bilateral and multilateral air services negotiations in a single meeting place, and over just a brief period of time.

Besides delivering a very efficient and cost effective solution to facilitate your meetings and agreements, we also expect to benefit this week from ICAN's many networking opportunities and the discussions which will take place on current trends.

Since the launch of this negotiation platform, in 2008, ICAO has been proud to support the ICAN process to the point that it has hosted over 5,000 bilateral meetings, resulting in close to 4,000 agreements and arrangements on behalf of 160 States and all world regions.

This year we are very happy to be welcoming over 91 States, more than 550 participants, and expect 485 meetings to be conducted.

These engagements will contribute importantly to the growth and sustainability of not only the international air transport industry, but also many other sectors with high dependency on air transport such as tourism and trade.

Additional ways that countries can assure the dependability and viability of their civil aviation systems includes the adopting of ICAO's policies and guidance on air transport economic regulation, and by assuring good governance through effective financing and resourcing of their regulatory authorities.

This is very important because for many States, and most especially Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), air transport is a very critical lifeline to foreign markets.

This is why ICAO encourages all States to meaningfully factor air transport objectives and synergies into their overall national economic strategies, and to alleviate regulatory impediments to optimize the international mobility of their citizens and businesses.

In this regard, I wish to take the opportunity to recall the work of many ICAO State's experts on developing a draft Convention on Foreign Investment in Airlines, to facilitate greater access to global capital markets for air operators, in line with ICAO's *Long-Term Vision for International Air Transport Liberalization*.

Other areas where ICAO is looking into new solutions include a specific international agreement to liberalize air cargo services further, and an in-depth assessment on whether there is a need to develop guidance for the economic regulation of international operations of Unmanned Aircraft Systems.

This assessment was specifically requested by States at our 41st Assembly October 2022, where they also asked the ICAO Council to prepare guidelines on how to provide greater flexibility to States to respond to international crises while protecting the integrity of air services agreements.

These are just a few areas where ICAO's work is intersecting with your roles and expectations today, but of course there are many other areas of significant importance to air transport today, which are also occupying us at the moment, including carbon neutral air transport, gender equality in this sector, and innovations in advanced air mobility and next generation aircraft, energy, and propulsion systems.

In concluding now, I wish to once again extend our deepest thanks to the Government of Saudi Arabia, its General Authority of Civil Aviation, and of course the Representative of Saudi Arabia to ICAO and his Delegation, for these excellent arrangements.

Hosting this event for a second time demonstrates not only the country's clear commitment to the global success of our sector, but also its recognition of the economic benefits, which the ICAN process realizes for both its participants and its hosts.

I also wish to remind you that 7 December marks International Civil Aviation Day and that States and ICAO will once again be commemorating it under the theme of '*Advancing Innovation for Global Aviation Development*'. I am sure that we will have an excellent opportunity to celebrate all together this historical day here in Riyadh.

I wish you all very successful meetings.

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