



**Opening remarks by
the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the ICAO 2024 Innovation Fair**

(ICAO Assembly Hall, 12 March 2024)

Your Excellencies, Council Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to extend to you all a very warm welcome to this 2024 ICAO Innovation Fair.

This year's gathering holds special significance as we commemorate 80 years since countries embraced the Convention on International Civil Aviation. Since 1944, our member States have convened Assemblies, most of them here in this Hall, to address the broadest and greatest challenges and opportunities facing global air transport.

Our hosting you here today in the ICAO Assembly Hall is not a coincidence. We see the pace of the transformation of aviation before us as an issue of that scale.

The ICAO Assembly is more than just a governing body or place – it is an expression of culture and multilateralism. For decades, aviation has achieved incredible progress on safety, security, and sustainability thanks to the commitment of our member States to cooperation and consensus here.

We are therefore delighted to be hosting you here in this spirit.

For the next three days senior representatives of ICAO Member States, of leading research entities, the aviation industry and private sector innovators will discuss the future of the sector, and how we can best work collaboratively to realize it.

While we encourage you to think about the success and spirit of the past, we also encourage you to take our 80th anniversary year as an opportunity to think about the foundations for the future that you may help to lay here.

Now, the increasing diversity of innovators and accelerating pace of innovations have compelled ICAO to consider how the Organization can enhance its responsiveness and relevance in this fast-changing environment.

One important milestone of this journey was formalized in this room in 2019, with the adoption of the ICAO Assembly Resolution A40- 27, Innovation in Aviation.

With this Resolution, ICAO Member States invited the organization to reflect on the adequacy of its formal standard-development processes in particular in relation to the Organization's ability

to keep pace of innovation, and on its ability to expand its partnerships to leverage on expertise developed outside of the aviation sector in order to better respond to its challenges.

Importantly, this Resolution also stressed the role of ICAO as the forum of choice for member States to exchange their experience and approaches to innovation.

These messages have been translated in actions.

Despite the pandemic intervening, ICAO has made great strides to fulfil this mandate given by its member States.

For example, the ICAO Council has intensified its discussions at the strategic level with industry leaders, through the establishment of an Industry Consultative Forum.

Together, we have already scanned the industry's horizon of priorities for the coming years, identifying climate change, pandemic resilience, digitalization, and cybersecurity as priority focus areas for our attention and action.

The fourth meeting of the Forum took place just last month.

Key stakeholders in the aviation industry, research and academia shared their insights on cybersecurity and cyber resilience, looking at how to collectively reduce the vulnerability of our sector and respond in a coordinated and efficient manner to cyber attacks.

The ICAO 2024 Innovation Fair is another stepping-stone on ICAO's path towards a reinvigorated relationship with the aviation and innovation communities.

In particular, areas of work pertaining to the digitalization of aviation require unprecedented levels of collaboration, not just at the technical level, but also across various levels of governance.

We also very much look forward to hearing the insights of the ICAO Member States, noting that civil aviation authorities are at the forefront of many challenges posed by the integration of frontier technologies and methods.

Understanding and building upon their lessons learned will be invaluable to our current efforts, and integral to realizing effective and comprehensive solutions.

In the area of lessons learned, we see that new and more agile forms of cooperation are helping new ideas rise to the forefront much more quickly than before.

One of the key intentions of the ICAO 2024 Innovation Fair is to provide a prominent platform to leverage state of the art digital products and creating an environment conducive to the inclusion of new entrants. This is about supporting those innovations and initiatives that will contribute to transforming our sector, in a safe, efficient, secure, economically viable and environmentally responsible manner.

In the course of the Innovation Fair, we will also be exploring much more than just technologies and operations.

For example, artificial Intelligence is also expected to advance and impact many aviation domains. Conversely, a number of recent aviation innovations are already being applied by other sectors.

This raises questions around shared interest and the common good, which are clearly relevant to multilateral decision makers.

This year's Innovation Fair will also be hosting a dedicated start-up roundtable.

Our objective with this roundtable is to learn about the projects, products and services that innovators are working on and to reflect on the systemic challenges that they face.

These challenges could be due to – for instance - their initial lack of proximity with the aviation industry, lack of knowledge of the standards and recommended practices that apply to the sector, or simply challenges in identifying the right contacts.

We are very lucky to have the next generation of aviation professionals with us here today, who will obviously be the stewards and beneficiaries of the transformations we will be discussing.

Several students will be presenting their research projects under the heading of “My Thesis in 180 seconds”, outlining their vision of the future of our sector.

I would also be remiss if I forgot to mention as well that the results of the ICAO Innovation Competition will be announced tomorrow.

I have been impressed by the level and diversity of the applications submitted, and based on what I have seen, we have many reasons to be optimistic about the future of our sector.

Moving back to the present time, AI, machine learning, big data applications, and the overall digitalization of aviation are just a few of the frontier technologies that we collectively need to better understand.

This is especially the case when trying to determine the practical need for associated global Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs).

ICAO has recently taken a bold initiative, with the adoption of the direct submission process. This process allows ICAO to leverage the knowledge and expertise built at the level of one or more States in understanding a new technology or procedure.

It is the most visible manifestation of ICAO's efforts to review its procedures as civil aviation authorities themselves adapt their structures and processes to new technologies.

On this point, I would like to highlight the perspectives that will be shared on this topic by Shri Vumlunmang Vualnam, Secretary of the Ministry of Civil Aviation of India in a recorded address.

Before I conclude, I also wish to invite you all to visit the Innovation Fair exhibition, where private sector companies, start-ups, academia civil aviation authorities, and others, are presenting state-of-the-art technologies, and novel concepts for air services and operations.

Now, I am sure I speak for all of my Council colleagues in acknowledging the tremendous value your insights will have for ICAO, and in appreciating this important opportunity to establish a more intensive on-going dialogue at the global level.

I wish you all a very engaging next few days.

Thank you.