



**Opening address by
the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
at the ICAO Air Services Negotiation (ICAN) 2024 Event**

(Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 21 October 2024)

*Honourable Loke Siew Fook, Minister of Transport of Malaysia,
Mr. Jana Santhiran Muniayan, Secretary General of Ministry of Transport of Malaysia,
Honourable Ministers,
Council Representatives,
Director Generals of Civil Aviation,
distinguished delegates,*

Welcome to ICAN 2024.

As ICAN returns to Asia after seven years, ICAO is grateful to the government of Malaysia for hosting this prestigious event in the vibrant city of Kuala Lumpur at this outstanding venue.

Since then, our aviation industry's resilience has been tested. We have seen passenger numbers plummet and then surge back. We have adapted to new health protocols, embraced technology, and reimagined air travel. This adaptability is in aviation's DNA.

Here, at this Opening Ceremony of ICAN2024, I wish to recall that ICAO and its member states are guided by the Assembly Resolution A41-27 which presses the Long-Term Vision for International Air Transport Liberalization. A vision aimed at fostering a transformation to a more open, competitive, and sustainable global air transport industry.

This vision is our roadmap. That's why I urge all States to adopt ICAO's guidelines on air transport economic policies. These recommendations are the building blocks of a harmonized global regulatory framework.

ICAN's development over the years mirrors the evolution of aviation industry. Supporting these opportunities is why in the beginning, we imagined a forum where nations could come together, negotiate, and shape the future of air services. Sixteen years later, that concept has become a powerful reality shaping the future of air services. Today, it stands as a comprehensive forum for learning, discussion, and networking. This evolution reflects aviation industry's dynamism and ICAO's commitment to meeting changing needs.

The numbers here in Kuala Lumpur also tell the story of ICAN's development: 83 States, approximately 700 participants, and approximately 500 meetings planned. Behind these figures lie countless opportunities for connection, growth, and progress.

Supporting those opportunities is why ICAO's work on economic regulation extends beyond ICAN. One key initiative involves creating frameworks to ensure Air Services Agreements remain effective during crises, applying lessons learnt from recent global challenges. We are also developing guidance for the economic regulation of unmanned aircraft systems, a technology poised to revolutionize aviation. Although this topic is not part of negotiations here this week, it will become a topic that we will have to address separately because it is something that will become a reality in the coming years.

Sustainable development is our imperative. This translates to investing in cleaner energies and technologies, optimizing routes, and reimagining our operations as we extend our air services. And in this regard, I would be remiss to not mention the Long-Term Aspirational Goal that was adopted two years ago, aiming at net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. This is a commitment of our States, a commitment of ICAO and we must therefore pursue this objective. And let me also recall the adoption of the global framework on Sustainable Aviation Fuels, Lower Carbon Aviation Fuels and other cleaner energy sources at CAAF/3 in Dubai last year, aiming at achieving a five percent carbon emission reduction by 2030. Crucially, we must apply these sustainability principles and practices to support growth where it is needed most – in the emerging economies of lesser developed states. This approach ensures that as we expand global connectivity, we do so responsibly and equitably, aligning with our strategic goal of leaving no country behind.

Given these imperatives, I call upon all States to fully integrate air transport into their priorities within national economic strategies. By aligning our aviation policies with sectors like tourism and trade, we create a multiplier effect that benefits entire economies. Prioritizing aviation strategically will unleash its potential as a unique and irreplaceable catalyst for broader economic development. You are here because you know that aviation is an enabler of social and economic development of the world, and I repeat social because connectivity doesn't just connect businesses, or tourism, it creates connections between cultures, between people and as alluded to in the Preamble to the *Convention on International Civil Aviation*, or Chicago Convention, can contribute to peace, and friendship.

And as I have mentioned the Chicago Convention, I wish to emphasize that as we approach ICAO's 80th anniversary in December this year, it is fitting to reflect on aviation's contributions to global society and explore ways to amplify these positive impacts of aviation on economic development. For eight decades, the Convention on International Civil Aviation has guided us through unprecedented growth and technological advances. This milestone prompts us not only to reflect on our journey but, more importantly, to envision and shape an even more impactful future for global aviation. This is the reason why the Council of ICAO will adopt, in just two-weeks time, a new ICAO Strategic Plan from 2026-2050 at a moment when we are celebrating the 80th anniversary – while we celebrate our achievements, we must also look forward. And in looking forward not just to the next triennium, but up to 2050.

Your investments will determine the benefit to your system in 10, 15 or 20 years. For this reason ICAO has decided to adopt the Strategic Plan from 2026 to 2050. Most of the items that we introduced in the Strategic Plan are new Strategic Objectives because our Strategic Objectives have changed. They changed because aviation has continuously evolved. As I mentioned before, we have introduced one Strategic Objective of *No Country Left Behind*. To support the development of air transport globally, we must ensure that no country is left behind, because in particular those developing countries that will face all sorts of challenges in the development of air transport, are those countries that will benefit but will need support to create a strong safety oversight, to implement effective security measures, to organize airspace in the most

efficient way. We are moving from this year of approximately 4.6 billion passengers up to more than 12 billion passengers in 2050. You have to accommodate this traffic – in the airport, in the airspace – this is the challenge. We are here in Kuala Lumpur supporting the process of development of air transport through negotiations and ICAO is more than ready.

Your negotiations this week play a crucial role in realizing that vision. The core elements of air service agreements - traffic rights, capacity, and market access – remain central. However, the context in which these agreements operate is evolving rapidly. The decisions you make here will set the stage for how air transport adapts to and thrives in changing global conditions.

I encourage you to consider the long-term implications of your negotiations. The frameworks you establish today will shape our industry's future. Each agreement you reach here strengthens the global air transport network. Your efforts lay the groundwork for increased connectivity and efficiency worldwide, advancing aviation into a new era of growth and innovation.

Your negotiations are shaping the future of global aviation. We should aim for a future where barriers are lowered, innovation thrives, and the benefits of air travel are accessible to all.

In closing, let me again express our gratitude to our hosts, the government of Malaysia. Your warm hospitality sets the stage for what I'm confident will be a week of productive negotiations and meaningful exchanges.

Thank you, and I wish you all successful negotiations.