



ICAO

**Keynote Address by
the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the ICAO Facilitation Conference 2025 (FALC 2025)**

(Doha, Qatar, 14 April 2025)

*H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Thani, Minister of Transport of Qatar,
Honorable Ministers,
H.E. Mohammed Faleh Al-Hajri, Acting President, Civil Aviation Authority, Qatar,
Dear Secretary General of ICAO,
Excellencies,
Distinguished representatives to the ICAO Council,
Distinguished guests,
Colleagues,
Good morning,*

It is a great pleasure to open the ICAO Facilitation Conference 2025. I would like to begin by expressing ICAO's deepest gratitude to the Government of Qatar for hosting this important event, and for its unwavering commitment to enhancing facilitation for air transport.

By 2050, the number of air travellers is expected to be more than double, reaching over 12 billion passengers annually.

This unprecedented growth presents both a tremendous opportunity and a critical challenge for the global aviation community, and more in general, for States.

As States prepare for this surge in demand, facilitation will play a pivotal role in ensuring that growth is managed in an orderly, secure, and efficient manner.

The seamless passenger experience requires streamlined border processes, enhanced inter-agency coordination, and the deployment of modern, interoperable digital technologies.

Additionally, robust facilitation frameworks will enable States to uphold the highest standards as they improve their air transport systems.

The global aviation industry has shown remarkable resilience in recent years, and the challenges of this decade have brought us closer together in many respects.

This means that we are in many ways better prepared to shape its future than ever before.

Our collaboration allows us to enhance efficiency and create opportunities.

That is why our discussions over the coming days will help accelerate efforts towards delivering a more resilient and accessible air travel experience for all.

Let me begin with our foundation - cooperation and coordination.

The implementation of National Air Transport Facilitation Programmes and the establishment of National Air Transport Facilitation Committees remain central to our efforts. Additionally, we must continue to enhance communication strategies and effective collaboration within and between ICAO panels, working groups, and stakeholders.

This will ensure that facilitation measures seamlessly integrate with global aviation standards.

The cooperation is essential as we strengthen travel document integrity and border control.

The standardized implementation of Machine-Readable Travel Documents and electronic MRTDs will enhance both security and efficiency at border control points, and beyond.

By embracing new technologies, we will transform passenger clearance processes, reduce airport congestion, and dramatically improve the travel experience.

They will help us ensure that passengers remain at the heart of everything we do.

Expanding capacity at airports, strengthening the role of airport authorities, and creating truly seamless clearance procedures will also be key.

As we move forward, protecting human safety and dignity of all travellers will continue to be a fundamental responsibility for all States and stakeholders.

We must resolve the ongoing challenge of unruly passengers. Your insights at this Forum on this priority will be particularly important to achieving progress globally.

We must also advance on fair and humane policies for the facilitation of inadmissible persons, deportees, refugees, and stateless persons. Along with our commitment to combat human trafficking, this work to protect the vulnerable demands coordinated action between States, agencies, and aviation stakeholders.

The fundamental welfare of passengers must also be safeguarded to the greatest extent possible when the unthinkable happens.

We must strengthen our support for aircraft accident victims and their families, ensuring swift and compassionate responses in times of crisis.

We are already revolutionizing border security while expediting travel through the implementation of Passenger Data Systems, including Advanced Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record data.

The standardization of Electronic Travel Systems is also contributing to an interoperable and efficient air transport environment.

These advances are just the beginning.

Through biometrics, digital travel documents, and automated border control systems, we can fully transform the passenger experience.

ICAO is committed to encouraging the responsible adoption of these emerging technologies through well-designed global standards.

These technologies will have countless benefits, including by making civil aviation more accessible to everyone.

Your discussions on eliminating barriers for passengers with disabilities and those with reduced mobility will be essential to the development of an ICAO strategy towards this goal. We can then align with this strategy and use it to evaluate our progress.

This policy and technology approach is also at the heart of our approach to public health in aviation. Building on lessons from the High-Level Conference on COVID-19, we must continue strengthening our resilience against future public health challenges through both technology and policy. Aviation industry must maintain robust health measures and emergency response capabilities.

This will be an equally important focus for you here in Doha.

Before concluding today, I would also like to address our cargo priorities, particularly with regard to the need to streamline clearance and release processes through enhanced digitalization.

More specifically however, I must highlight the importance of prioritizing the automation and interoperability of cargo systems, and the alignment of the provisions of Annex 9 with those of the World Customs Organization's revised Kyoto Convention.

These are key to building a more efficient global supply chain and minimizing delays in air cargo operations. This will have obvious positive consequences for all, but for just-in-time and e-commerce businesses in particular.

Again, success in these –and all the initiatives I have mentioned today - will depend on empowering all States with the necessary tools, and expertise.

Through capacity building and implementation support, we will strengthen regulatory frameworks, enhance operational capabilities, and foster international cooperation to address common challenges.

This speaks directly to the ICAO Long Term Strategic Plan through to 2050, which aims to deliver Seamless, Accessible, and Reliable Mobility for all. By advancing towards its goal, ICAO seeks to build a truly connected air transport system that enhances operational efficiency, strengthens global mobility, promotes equity, and supports economic resilience and recovery.

It is also against this backdrop that the Ministerial session of this conference will discuss the draft Doha Declaration. This Declaration should set a clear strategic direction for facilitation in civil aviation, aligning our immediate actions with ICAO's long-term plan.

Distinguished delegates, as the Secretary General, Juan Carlos Salazar will soon illustrate, this Conference offers a unique opportunity for you to shape the next quarter century of progress on facilitation.

That is why I am urging each of you to engage fully in these discussions, share your valuable experiences, and above all commit to actions that will enhance global air transport.

Thank you.

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