



ICAO

**Opening Remarks by
the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the Tenth Edition of AFI Aviation Week Events**

(Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 26 May 2025)

*Your Excellencies, Col. Kembo Dugish Campell Mohadi, Vice President of the Republic of Zimbabwe,
Mr. Felix T. Mhona, Minister of Transport and Infrastructural Development,
Honourable Ministers and distinguished Government Officials,
Distinguished Members of the ICAO Council,
Distinguished Representative of the African Union Commission,
Directors General of Civil Aviation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Tenth Edition of AFI Aviation Week Events, a crucial forum for advancing aviation across the African continent.

I extend my sincere gratitude to His Excellency, Col. Kembo Dugish Campell Mohadi, Vice President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and the Government of Zimbabwe, for hosting this prestigious event. Their generous hospitality has provided us with excellent facilities here at beautiful Victoria Falls – one of the seven natural wonders of the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

On behalf of the ICAO Council, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the warm welcome we have received since our arrival. Zimbabwe's commitment to aviation is evident not only in its gracious hospitality but also in its ongoing efforts to strengthen air connectivity as a driver of sustainable socio-economic development.

AFI Aviation Week is the largest aviation gathering on the African continent, bringing together stakeholders to shape the future of air transport in Africa.

The recent AFCAC Directors General meeting identified key regional priorities and established actionable steps to strengthen aviation capacity across Africa. I commend these leaders and stakeholders for their work in advancing sustainable aviation across this continent.

As you know, ICAO has set its own ambitious vision for international civil aviation's future. Our new long-term Strategic Plan for 2026 to 2050, unanimously approved by the ICAO Council, establishes six key strategic goals that will guide international civil aviation through a period of unprecedented growth and change. ICAO forecasts indicate that passenger traffic will grow from approximately 4.6 billion in 2024 to 12.4 billion by 2050, while air cargo is expected to more than double,

reaching nearly 638 billion freight tonne kilometres annually. This unprecedented growth will require significant expansion of infrastructure, workforce and technological capabilities.

Africa will play an important role in this regard. Africa represents currently only 3% of global traffic and our short-term forecasts don't show significant increase. Nevertheless, it covers more than 20% of the territory of global airspace services for air navigation. For a region characterized by vast distances and diverse geographies, aviation is a crucial enabler of connectivity. That is why implementation of the SAATM is fundamental. We must continue to accelerate this process so that SAATM is fully implemented across the continent, recognizing the benefits that an open air transport market can bring in terms of connectivity and consequently to the economic and social development of Africa.

Over the next days, our programme features important events aligned with ICAO's Strategic Goals: that every flight is safe and secure; aviation is environmentally sustainable; aviation delivers seamless, accessible, and reliable mobility for all; no country is left behind; legal frameworks are modernized, and aviation is economically viable.

With the No Country Left Behind initiative now one of ICAO's Strategic Goals, you can be sure that ICAO is fully committed to supporting the region's aviation development.

The unified Steering Committee for regional aviation safety, security, facilitation, and human resources development in Africa will meet for the very first time here this week, following adoption of a new Governance Framework which established a single Steering Committee for both the AFI and AFI SECFAL Plans. ICAO is very pleased with these recent developments. In fact these two programmes were established by the ICAO Council in 2007 and 2015 respectively. There was a need to review and adjust them in order to enhance their effectiveness and efficiency from a Governance perspective. Additionally, it will be important to re-consider them in the framework of the No Country Left Behind ICAO Strategic Goal. The Council will do so at the earliest opportunity.

As we look to the future, it is heartening to see Africa's strong commitment to cooperation that enables the safe, secure, and sustainable development of international civil aviation.

I wish you all productive deliberations that will yield meaningful outcomes for shaping the future of the aviation industry in Africa and beyond.

With that, I look forward to a highly successful edition of AFI Aviation Week.

Thank you for your kind attention.