



**Opening Remarks by
the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the Second ICAO – UN Tourism Ministerial Conference
on Tourism and Air Transport in Africa**

(Luanda, Angola, 23 July 2025)

*His Excellency the Secretary General of UN Tourism, Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili,
His Excellency the Honourable Minister of Transport, Ricardo Viegas D'Abreu,
His Excellency the Honourable Minister of State for Economic Coordination, José de Lima Massano,
His Excellency the Honourable Minister of Tourism, Márcio de Jesus Lopes Daniel,
Her Excellency President of the Constitutional Court of Angola, Laurinda Jacinto Prazeres Monteiro Cardoso,
Ministers of Tourism and Transport here present,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is an honour for me to join you at this Second ICAO – UN Tourism Ministerial Conference on Tourism and Air Transport in Africa.

I would like to express our appreciation to the Republic of Angola and to His Excellency President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, for graciously hosting this important event.

It is especially meaningful to reconvene in 2025, to build on the momentum and partnerships forged during our inaugural meeting in Sal Island, Cape Verde, in 2019 and in the aftermath of the wreak havoc generated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Tourism and air transport are critical to sustainable development, economic diversification, and regional integration.

Angola's dedication to promoting these sectors demonstrates a growing recognition throughout Africa of their vital role.

I also want to thank the Secretary General of UN Tourism, Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili and his team, for the coordination of this very important event.

Our Member States are seeing the importance of fostering collaborative partnerships between their air transport and tourism sectors, as demonstrated by the success of this event.

Africa's air transport sector has continued to grow but unfortunately however at a level below the average global growth. In fact in 2023, Revenue Passenger-Kilometres fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels and continued to grow raising by 36.6 % compared to 2022, while the average global growth was 38.6%.

Nevertheless, we expect a faster growth in Africa in the long-term forecast.

According to ICAO's long-term forecasts out to 2050, passenger traffic is expected to grow at a compound annual rate of 3.8% compared to the world average of 3.4% for the same period.

Cargo traffic is also projected to expand steadily, with a total growth rate of 3.2% annually over the same period.

These projections underscore rising demand for air connectivity and logistics.

They highlight the importance of continued investment in infrastructure, innovation, and policy support to meet future needs.

Since our first conference, we have witnessed encouraging progress.

Despite the unprecedented global disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa's tourism and air transport sectors have shown remarkable resilience and recovery.

In 2024, Africa accounted for nearly 7% of global tourist arrivals and 5% of global tourism spending. This upward trend signals growing confidence and opportunity.

We all know that Air transport remains the backbone of international tourism.

Globally, over 54% of tourists arrive by air. In Africa, this interdependence is especially significant, as aviation connects remote destinations, supports regional integration, and provides access to rich cultural and natural heritage sites that otherwise would be inaccessible.

Air transport and tourism make substantial contributions to Africa's GDP. They generate considerable foreign exchange earnings and provide employment opportunities that support millions of livelihoods. This is especially important for creating a prosperous future for women and youth.

However, challenges persist.

The full realization of Africa's potential is hindered by infrastructure gaps, regulatory fragmentation, limited intra-African connectivity, high operational costs, and restrictive visa regimes.

Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires coordinated, cross-sectoral action and sustained political will at both national and regional levels.

It calls for harmonized policies, strategic infrastructure investment, and the implementation of enabling frameworks such as the Single African Air Transport Market. Only through such collective efforts can Africa unlock the full socio-economic benefits of a thriving, integrated air transport and tourism ecosystem.

More States are committing to the single market efforts to liberalize air services and align regulations. From ICAO's perspective, this momentum is a vital step toward achieving a more integrated, efficient, and competitive African air transport sector.

ICAO continues to support the single market through technical assistance, regulatory guidance, and capacity-building initiatives, in alignment with our Long-term Vision for Air Transport Liberalization.

Through this vision, we provide a strategic framework to guide States in progressively opening their air transport markets.

This Vision promotes a phased and balanced approach to liberalization.

It emphasizes fair competition, consumer protection, and regulatory harmonization, while respecting national sovereignty and development priorities.

The Vision is a roadmap for States to unlock the economic and social benefits of a more connected and competitive aviation sector.

In parallel, the 2025 ICAO AFI Aviation Week in Zimbabwe reaffirmed these principles and brought renewed focus to the economic dimensions of air transport in Africa.

The event convened high-level officials and industry leaders to address key issues such as regulatory harmonization and the acceleration of the single market.

As we look ahead, our shared goal remains clear: to make air transport and tourism accessible, affordable, and sustainable.

This conference is an opportunity to reaffirm our commitments, share best practices, and develop actionable strategies that will unlock the full potential of tourism and air transport in Africa.

I am confident that through continued collaboration between ICAO, UN Tourism, the African Union, regional organizations, our development partners, and Member States, we will succeed.

You have an important opportunity to build a solid foundation in advance of the 42nd Session of the ICAO Assembly, which will take place this fall in Montréal.

By aligning here, Africa will be well prepared to make strong and crucially important contributions to the global deliberations in Montréal.

Let us work together here to shape a more connected, prosperous, and resilient Africa, with aviation and tourism as key drivers of global prosperity.

I also want to highlight that ICAO is organizing the Seventh Worldwide Air Transport Conference, with a theme of “Laying the Foundation of Global Aviation Sustainability.”

Taking place in November 2026, it will provide another vital platform for dialogue, cooperation, and policy development among Member States, industry stakeholders, and international organizations.

The objective will be to advance the regulatory and economic frameworks that underpin international air transport, including supporting the growth of tourism.

A State Letter will be sent to Member States to seek their input on the Agenda of this important high-level meeting.

I would now like once again to express our sincere appreciation to the Republic of Angola for the warm hospitality, and to UN Tourism for its continued partnership and support.

Your contributions have been instrumental in advancing our shared vision for a more integrated, dynamic and forward-looking air transport sector across the continent.

Thank you.