



**Closing remarks by
the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the last meeting of the 236th Council Session**

(Montréal, Canada, 28 November 2025)

As this is my last Council meeting, at the end of an incredible six-year journey, I wish to share with you some reflections.

I could mention what we have done and the several achievements or milestones during the last six years, starting from how ICAO addressed the COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged just a few weeks after the start of my mandate, or the adoption of the Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2050 Long Term Aspirational Goal, probably the most important result during the six years.

However, I don't wish to make a compilation of what the ICAO Council has done or has contributed to achieving during this period.

Many challenges and many success stories. Most of you know all of them.

In my view, the most important achievement is the fact that we have helped this Organization to deliver better thanks to a modernization process.

In my presentation as Presidential candidate in October 2019, while mentioning the main challenges that ICAO had to face in the future in the different domains of the Strategic Objectives, starting from the fast evolution pace of the aviation industry, I underlined that to be successful in addressing these challenges ICAO had to adapt, modernize, and evolve. Accordingly, I proposed what I called an “agenda for modernization” with very few points that would characterize my presidency if elected.

I will not go through each of them, but I want to stress how important it has been to enhance the internal working environment. To create better cooperation and mutual trust between the Council and the Secretary General, a better internal communication, more transparency; how important it has been to work on the governance, eliminating grey areas regarding competences of the Council and of the Secretary General – and in this regard I wish to recall the adoption of the accountability framework-; how important it has been to enhance the working methods of Council and of the subsidiary bodies but also introducing more flexibility in arranging Council meetings and Sessions; how important it has been to work on innovation and relations with industry; and finally, how important it has been to enhance the No Country Left Behind initiative with its incorporation amongst the six ICAO Strategic Goals in order to better support global aviation development and reduce differences amongst States.

The Agenda for Modernization finds continuity in the Transformational Objectives, a great initiative promoted by the Secretary General, Juan Carlos Salazar, and immediately supported by the Council.

Challenges will persist and evolve. Accordingly, this Organization has a continuous need to adapt, modernize and evolve in order to continue to face the evolving challenges. It is not a process done only once. It is an ongoing process.

Regarding my experience as President of the Council, I wish to underline the great vision of the Fathers of the Chicago Convention when they wrote in Article 51 that the President has no vote.

These few words have incredibly reinforced the role of the President of the Council in his/her role of conciliator or facilitator.

I mentioned several times in Council and I will repeat once more that the Council is composed by 36 Representatives that take positions on behalf of their 36 Member States.

But this Governing Body has been elected by the Member States of the Assembly. Collegially, the ICAO Council takes decisions on behalf of and with impact on 193 States. The multilateral character of the ICAO Council requires that negotiations among the 36 Representatives are taken keeping in mind the interest of the 193 Contracting States.

As you know, I have guided the Council striving to take decisions by consensus. I already mentioned in my opening remarks at the beginning of this Council Session that the Rules of Procedure for the Council don't provide instructions on how to take decisions by consensus. In fact, it's not a matter of rules or procedures.

It is a crucial pillar for success of multilateralism: decisions must be taken listening to different views and the President has to strive to create conditions for mutual understanding notwithstanding interests at times are not convergent. Decisions taken by consensus will last longer and will be more widely implemented.

I have no doubt saying that the large convergence of Member States at the 42nd Session of the ICAO Assembly was also based on proposals and decisions taken by the Council, sometimes at the conclusion of long deliberations, by consensus.

For the President, this requires more preparatory work, some patience, sometimes to take difficult decisions postponing the finalization of Council deliberations, despite recognizing that a majority position could exist, in order to achieve consensus. I want to stress that this is not written neither in Article 51 of the Chicago Convention nor in the Rules of Procedure for the Council, but this is the spirit of Article 51 itself.

On a personal note, I cannot over emphasize how unique the experience of the Presidency of the ICAO Council is. I refer to the multilateralism and multiculturalism that characterise the functions of the Council and the human relations established within the Council, inside and outside this Council Chamber.

I have always felt the need to reduce the distances between President and Council Representatives in order to facilitate communication. It has been natural for me to call each of the Council

Representatives by name outside the formal meetings. From my side, I have always felt friendship from your side notwithstanding you continued to call me “Mr President”.

This unique experience had me travel to many States, and meet a plethora of officials from the Civil Aviation Administrations of the planet, building rapport with them and establishing precious relationships.

I have had the opportunity to meet Heads of State, Ministers of Foreign Affairs or Transport advocating the role of aviation as an enabler of socio-economic development of their Country. Impossible to mention all of them, but it is for me impossible not to mention the brief exchange I had with King Charles of the United Kingdom when I highlighted what ICAO was doing on aviation decarbonization, or the meeting with Pope Francesco when I explained what ICAO is doing to fight human trafficking, or when I argued with the President of Kenya Ruto on taxation on aviation, or when I received an unplanned invitation at lunch by the President of Kazakhstan Tokayev and we discussed about aviation development in the Central Asia Region, or when I met the Emir of Qatar Al Thani and we started talking about aviation and ended talking that he had spent holidays in my native island, Sicily.

I believe that I have already mentioned in Council, but I wish to underline once more that I have witnessed over my six years, an increased political engagement of States on aviation. Again, impossible to mention all but how not to mention the progress done by Angola, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Cameroon and many others in Africa. And what about the developments in Middle East, where together with Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar, we see Oman and Kuwait emerging more. And how not to mention the incredible development of aviation in India, China and Brazil. And what about the promising development in Central Asia starting with Kazakhstan. I am sure that I forget many, but I wanted to stress that I have witnessed over the six years stronger political engagement by Member States. This is confirmed by the high number of Ministers attending the 42nd Assembly.

Another fond memory that I will cherish is the enthusiastic interest of aviation students and young workers that I met during my visits. Enthusiasm that normally turned into an incredible quantity of selfies. In my opinion, this is an example of success of ICAO training.

I think that for them to meet the President of the ICAO Council, and I believe it is the same meeting the Secretary General, is emotionally impactful. They met in person the leaders of what they have studied is so important for aviation. This has been a strong encouragement for me regarding our engagement with future aviation generations.

I believe that I should also mention that the increasing geopolitical tensions have unavoidably impacted aviation and consequently also ICAO with difficult decisions.

Of course, I am not happy for that. However, what leaves me absolutely confident is that the Council decisions taken as a consequence or in connection of geopolitical tensions have been based on facts and data. This is important, as the Council is the guardian of the Chicago Convention and has to act consequently when needed.

Concluding, I wish to thank you, Council Representatives, and each of your predecessors for the confidence and continuous support given to me throughout the course of my mandate.

Secretary General Juan Carlos Salazar, with whom I have been working so well. I have only words of admiration for your work, your style, your engagement and your wisdom in taking sometimes difficult decisions.

Directors and the entire ICAO Secretariat. The dedication of ICAO staff is commendable. I wish to thank each of them for their contribution to the Organization and for the support given to me in performing my functions. Special thanks to the teams that support the Council. First and foremost, the ACS. Its support has been crucial for preparation and finalization of each Council meeting. The technical team, always present although not visible. And the interpreters. I hope I have not created too much trouble with my Italian accent.

The Presidents of the Air Navigation Commission. Each of them has been very important to prepare Council decisions on crucial adoptions of SARPs helping at the same time the Council in addressing the technological challenges.

The Delegation of Canada, on behalf of the Government of the Host Country, for its support and consideration of me and for the fruitful dialogues established to address crucial moments as, for example, the celebrations of the 80th Anniversary.

The Delegation of Italy, on behalf of the Government of Italy which has given me the opportunity to live this incredible experience.

My team. I can't call it the Office of the President. Ted Veloce, Jasna Sepetavec, Rima Ghanem and Sue-Ann Rapattoni. There are no words to say how they have supported me. They have participated with authentic personal dedication in all my efforts. I have felt them friends more than staff of the Office of the President. Dear President elect, you are really lucky in having this excellent team ready to support you.

Finally, my wife Anna Maria. She reminds me from time to time that when I met her for the first time, not a few years ago, I told her that I didn't wish to remain working in Catania, notwithstanding I had already the opportunity to do so. She reminds me that she was prepared to travel but not so much and not so far. Without her support it would have been impossible for me to dedicate my energies to the difficult role of President of the ICAO Council.

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