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PLENARY

Agenda Item 8: Statements by delegations of Member States

**STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE ELAINE L. CHAO,
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION,
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

(Presented by United States)

Thank you, President Williams-Singh.

Madame Secretary General, Mr. President, and distinguished colleagues, it is an honor to represent the United States at the 40th Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which celebrates its 75th anniversary this year.

Let me recognize our Ambassador to ICAO, Thomas Carter, as well as the new Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, Stephen Dickson. He looks forward to meeting and working with all of you to ensure aviation safety around the world.

Let me also recognize Transportation Security Administrator and Acting Deputy Secretary for the U. S. Department of Homeland Security, David P. Pekoske.

The United States was honored to host the diplomatic conference which produced the Chicago Convention; the United States has been an active member of the ICAO Council ever since its inception; and the United States has willingly contributed its technical expertise to virtually every initiative ICAO has pursued over the last 75 years.

Today, global aviation is safer, more affordable, more efficient and more available than ever before. On a typical day, more than 100,000 commercial flights worldwide will carry 10 million passengers and \$17.5 billion worth of goods.

SAFETY

At the U.S. Department of Transportation, safety is the number one priority.

The United States supports the continued evolution of a high-level framework to strengthen safety worldwide.

A key priority is improving and strengthening the safety oversight capabilities of Member States and regional organizations. In addition, the U.S. supports the high-level framework driving the evolution of the global air navigation system.

The recent tragedies involving the 737 Max highlight the absolute necessity of monitoring safety indicators closely, as well as responding pre-emptively to prevent accidents before they occur. The U.S. Department of Transportation is devoting unprecedented resources to ensuring that the aircraft certification process maximizes safety.

To accomplish this, the FAA is following a deliberate, thorough process for evaluating the safety of the Boeing 737 Max. The FAA will lift the aircraft's grounding order only when it is determined safe to do so.

In considering this matter, the FAA will be guided by recommendations from the independent experts on the FAA Technical Advisory Board, as well as by the input of the Joint Authorities Technical Review, being conducted by representatives of international aviation authorities.

In addition, I have asked the U. S. Department of Transportation's Inspector General, to conduct an investigation of the certification of the 737 MAX aircrafts.

Further, I have commissioned a "Blue Ribbon Panel," or "Special Committee," to examine the FAA's certification process independently and to develop recommendations for improvement.

It is co-chaired by Retired U.S. Air Force General and Commander of the United States Transportation Command, General Darren McDew, and the former President of the Air Line Pilots Association, Lee Moak.

International coordination is important in all aspects of this process. The traveling public will not be well served if there are conflicting signals given by different regulatory authorities around the world.

INNOVATION

Another top priority at the U.S. Department of Transportation is to prepare for the transportation system and infrastructure of the future. This means engaging with emerging transportation technologies to address legitimate public concerns about safety, security, and privacy, without hampering innovation.

Our approach to new technology is not top-down, command and control. We are not in the business of picking technology winners and losers.

Aviation is growing rapidly, and being transformed by new technologies—including drones and reusable rockets. And perhaps in the near future: vertical flight urban vehicles and new supersonic aircraft.

The U.S. supports ICAO's efforts to amend standards and recommended practices. And we, too, are supporting procedures for air navigation practices to address the unique nature of the ever-evolving technologies associated with drones.

As technology evolves in a way that enables more aviation automation, we are also recommending that ICAO, Member States, and the industry work together to address automation dependency in the cockpit. Maintaining strong pilot skills in flight path management using manual flight control is critical for pilot confidence and competence.

Pilots need to be able to take control of the aircraft if an automated system does not function as intended. Further study of these issues, led by ICAO, could build upon the experience and expertise across Member States and the industry.

This could help identify best practices to potentially enhance safety for all nations.

Cooperative approaches between government and industry have been a major factor in the success of our country's commercial space industry. In the United States, private sector innovators have developed new air-launch systems, re-usable rockets, and multiple satellite deployment systems.

At this early stage, the United States believes it is extremely premature to develop international binding rules-- or standards and recommended practices-- related to suborbital or orbital commercial space transportation, or for commercial spaceports.

The United States envisions a national regulatory framework – focused on safety of operations and deconfliction with other airspace users– as the appropriate means of addressing the safety of commercial space transportation at this stage. Premature regulation, especially overregulation, would inhibit the growth of the very young space industry, not only in the United States, but globally.

SECURITY AND CYBERSECURITY

The United States supports the need for ICAO to raise the profile of aviation security worldwide. Key initiatives include expediting the development of standards and recommended practices for Passenger Name Record (PNR) data. This initiative will help States address the threat posed by foreign fighters traveling by aircraft, and to deter terrorist travel.

On cybersecurity, the U.S. supports a fully coordinated, global aviation trust framework. It should interconnect this community and increase information sharing to achieve operational improvements.

REFORM

To retain leadership in safety and security, ICAO must also become a leader in effective management and good governance. The U.S. remains concerned by incidents at ICAO that have come to light over the past year. In order for ICAO to continue to attract the best people, and to uphold and advance vital standards, it must have an organizational system that is transparent, fair, and worthy of trust.

We ask you to support the U.S. proposal for “Innovating at ICAO” to improve and modernize the organization. A cooperative reform effort will strengthen ICAO and advance its safety and security goals that are vital to the aviation industry and our global economies.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Finally, the United States strongly supports continued efforts to increase the aviation sector’s efforts in combatting human trafficking. Let us build on ICAO’s current support of Guidelines for Training Cabin Crew on Identifying and Responding to Trafficking in Persons. The United States calls on this assembly to adopt a resolution to increase awareness and training for all airport and aircraft operators’ personnel who interact with the public. There should also be a clear reporting system in place to contact authorities if trafficking is identified. Only strong, vigilant cooperation will put a stop to this heinous crime.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the United States looks forward to continuing to collaborate with ICAO and its regional partners to improve aviation safety, security and efficiency worldwide.

Thank you.

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