



**Opening address by the
President of the ICAO Council,
Dr. Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu,
to the Meeting on Sustainable Development in Africa**

(Antananarivo, Madagascar, 25 March 2015)

Good morning everyone.

It is a pleasure and a great honour for me to address this ICAO meeting supporting the sustainable development of air transport in Africa, and to be able to meet with you all here in the lovely city of Antananarivo.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Civil Aviation Authority of Madagascar for hosting this event, providing such excellent meeting facilities, and for the warm welcome and hospitality it has accorded to us. My heartfelt appreciation extends to the Malagasy Government for its generous support of this timely and, I trust, engaging meeting.

Our objective here is to provide a forum for government policy makers, air transport regulators, the industry and other aviation stakeholders. Through it we shall review the latest trends and developments, discuss common challenges, and explore practical, effective and collaborative solutions to ensure the sustainable development of air transport in Africa.

We are fortunate in this regard to benefit from the presence at this meeting of top representatives from the air transport and tourism sectors, as well as from the United Nations Development Programme.

Civil aviation has a long tradition of dialogue and open-mindedness. Since the first commercial flight, international air transport has thrived on a free-flow of information and constructive cooperation. Today, it is by far the world's safest and most efficient mode of mass transportation, not to mention a powerful engine of economic and social development everywhere that aircraft fly.

In Africa today for instance, aviation supports almost seven million jobs and 80 billion dollars in Gross Domestic Product. For Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) especially, it represents an essential lifeline to regional and global markets which enhance travel and tourism and other vital business activities.

Enhanced air transport connectivity is especially crucial for LLDCs, a situation particularly prevalent in Africa. It is also very relevant to the situation of Madagascar and its neighbours of the Indian Ocean. I would stress in this regard that ICAO fully supports the holistic concept of *Vanilla Islands*- an approach which is well-suited to our connectivity goals.

A major reason for aviation's continued growth and relevance in the world is that we have continuously embraced challenges as opportunities to learn, to innovate and to serve. With this in mind, I would like to set the stage for your deliberations by outlining some of the major challenges we currently face, as well as some of the solutions you may wish to consider over the next three days.

First we must do more to streamline the global air transport regulatory framework. There are more than 4,000 air services agreements today that dictate the rules and practices for air travel between countries. Bilateral agreements are still the primary tools at our disposal for the exchange of traffic rights, but some of the restrictions stemming from them can impede the orderly planning and growth of airline, airport and air navigation services operators.

Of our many challenges in this domain, the harmonization of competition frameworks and consumer protection schemes are two of the more high profile issues that we must definitely resolve.

Another formidable challenge is airspace and airport congestion. Required infrastructure in some areas has not kept pace with the rapid increase in aircraft movements, not to mention the projected doubling of traffic worldwide over the next 20 years.

And there is also the important matter of proliferating taxes and duties on aviation operations in many ICAO Member States, despite the clear evidence that such approaches bring about a negative long-term impact for both operators and the States which impose these high-tax regimes.

Many of these challenges are tied to shortfalls in funding and coordination, especially regarding the technical, managerial and financial resources required to ensure the effective implementation of ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs).

Some of you deal with them every day, and certainly everyone here today is committed to overcoming them as we have always done - by working together as a vibrant and unified international community.

ICAO has therefore been taking a more proactive approach by reaching out to industry, aviation stakeholders and applicable international organizations to create a more favourable environment for the economic development of air transport.

Recent initiatives undertaken with the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the World Customs Organization (WCO) are helping us to align our priorities and programmes and improve air transport connectivity in ways which will definitely be of benefit to African States.

Another step forward has been our establishment of a multi-disciplinary working group to explore solutions for the funding and financing of regulatory government oversight functions, aviation infrastructure development, and implementing the ICAO Aviation System Block Upgrades, or ASBUs.

And one very important step we have taken is through the *No Country Left Behind* campaign recently established by the ICAO Council.

The fundamental aim of *No Country Left Behind* is to better identify and coordinate the assistance and support which is so essential to the harmonized global implementation of ICAO Standards, especially in developing States.

I would add that while this is a Council initiative, it is also a very important personal priority for me that ICAO gets better at providing States what they need most from us. In this regard please let me assure you that ICAO will continue to ensure effective implementation of its various initiatives to assist African States, including for:

- The Comprehensive Regional Implementation Plan for Aviation Safety in Africa (AFI Plan);
- The AFI Aviation Security and Facilitation Initiative (AFI SECFAL);
- And the Human Resources Development Fund (HDRF) for training and capacity-building of Africa's skilled and management-level aviation personnel.

ICAO also assures its support for the full implementation of the Yamoussoukro Declaration and establishment of a single air transport market in Africa, consistent with the African Union's Agenda 2063.

In closing today, ladies and gentlemen, let me please take this opportunity to encourage your States to attend and benefit from our next ICAN event, which will be hosted by Turkey later this year from 19 to 23 October.

I wish you all a very successful conference, and I look forward to meeting many of you over the coming days.