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## ICAO AND UNWTO ENHANCE COOPERATION IN SUPPORT OF NEW UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

**MONTRÉAL/MADRID, 14 SEPTEMBER 2015** – The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) have announced a new joint strategic statement on *Tourism and Air Transport for Development*.

The *Medellín Statement* was agreed today at the first joint UNWTO/ICAO High-Level Forum on Tourism and Air Transport for Development held on the sidelines of the 21st UNWTO General Assembly in Medellín, Colombia. It highlights the global importance of air transport and tourism to improving the socio-economic prosperity of States and regions, and to realizing the new United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) which will be agreed at the UN SDG Summit next week in New York.

“There are tremendous benefits for States which can be derived from optimized air transport connectivity and local and regional tourism development,” commented ICAO Secretary General Dr. Fang Liu during her opening Forum remarks. “This is true not only in terms of increased business activity and economic growth, but also improved general prosperity and social welfare. With aviation set to double in flight and passenger volumes in just the next 15 years, it is essential that States prepare today to reap the full benefits of this growth in the years ahead.”

“With increased connectivity warranting long-term growth for aviation and tourism, our interlinked sectors represent lasting opportunities for socio-economic development. Yet if we are to harness these benefits, tourism and air transport must address persisting divergent policies and work towards a stronger, integrated position on inter-sectorial issues such as travel facilitation, market access, taxation or infrastructure development. As the global inter-governmental bodies responsible for tourism and aviation, UNWTO and ICAO are obliged to lead by example and pave the way for closer and more effective cooperation at all levels “ said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, opening the Forum.

The high-level policy-makers and regulators at the Joint Forum discussed challenges relating to policy convergence, the need for enhanced connectivity between flight destinations, air transport operator competitiveness, and travel facilitation for the more than 3.3 billion passengers who presently make use of air travel each year for their business or leisure needs.

“ICAO and the UNWTO have been actively engaged for some time in maximizing the cooperative opportunities for aviation and tourism,” stressed ICAO Council President Dr. Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu when opening the UNWTO General Assembly. “These efforts have been

aided by our private sector engagement through the Global Travel Association Coalition (GTAC), and they are critical to realizing both the long-term economic growth and prosperity benefits for States and the related targets in the UN SDGs.”