



ICAO Secretary General highlights future aviation challenges at 2019 ACI World Assembly

For immediate release

Montréal and Hong Kong, 3 April 2019 – Praising the many cost and efficiency benefits realized through the close cooperation in place between ICAO and the Airports Council International (ACI), ICAO Secretary General Dr. Fang Liu discussed a range of leading edge developments the UN aviation agency is now exploring when speaking to world airport leaders at the ACI World Annual General Assembly in Hong Kong.

Focusing her topics around the 2019 ACI Assembly theme of ‘What’s next for aviation? The future starts now’, Dr. Liu highlighted that ICAO is focusing global attention on some very exciting and even revolutionary aviation developments presently confronting global air transport.

“Whether we’re focused on the increasing prevalence of drone operations or commercial space transport, ICAO has been grateful for the proactive inputs from ACI, governments, and other air transport stakeholders as we seek to anticipate and close the gaps that might constrain future air transport growth and innovation,” Dr. Liu emphasized.

Remarking on the sector-wide trend toward increasing digitalization, Dr. Liu stressed that ICAO must constantly work to be at the leading edge of these developments, because as a standards-setting body it is beholden upon it to anticipate and facilitate aviation innovations.

“A key challenge this digital revolution poses for us, therefore, is how to find convergent global solutions which can practically apply to divergent local challenges and developments,” Dr. Liu said, noting that key drivers such as the exponential growth now being forecast for global flight and passenger volumes, and increased cybersecurity risks due to aviation’s increasing reliance on digital automation, were key to why aviation must be rapid and effective when responding to these challenges.

Dr. Liu stressed that ICAO’s role isn’t to be overly prescriptive and therefore to restrict innovation, but rather to approach the challenges of a digitized air transport sector by establishing “a comprehensive sectoral architecture which will provide a secure core foundation for sustainable air transport digital interoperability.”

“Currently this security is realized through certificated identities, and so ICAO’s more specific challenge is to harmonize the certification process in order to safeguard the myriad information streams now present in our network,” she added.

She recalled to the gathered airport leaders that ICAO had already taken the first steps in this direction earlier this year, when she signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, better known as ICANN, which will see the two agencies exploring how to establish a functional trust bridge to secure aviation’s digital communications.

“This work will require some intensive consultation as things proceed, and we’re grateful that ACI will be able to represent the interests and concerns of airport operators as we fine-tune the overall framework,” Dr. Liu remarked. “And I have also been encouraged by how ICAO’s Global Aviation Security Plan is helping to deliver a more effective level of global coordination around these

cybersecurity and other priorities for aviation today.”

Dr. Liu concluded by noting that these efforts would operate in parallel to ICAO’s separate strong priority to make governments aware of the significant network capacity and efficiency expansion now required in many areas of the world, and of the investments required to support this development and modernization.

While in Hong Kong, Dr. Liu also had an opportunity to provide remarks to the Fourth Aviation Silk Road Conference, where she highlighted how China’s current ‘Belt and Road’ programme objectives were serving as a very helpful strategic platform from which to engage developing States on the benefits of air connectivity and their wider aspirations to achieve the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals..



ICAO Secretary General Dr. Fang Liu addresses the 2019 ACI Asia-Pacific/World Annual General Assembly. Focusing her topics around the 2019 ACI Assembly theme of 'What's next for aviation? The future starts now', Dr. Liu highlighted that ICAO is focusing global attention on some very exciting and even revolutionary aviation developments presently confronting global air transport, including the need for a trust framework to support aviation digital communications and greater responsiveness from regulators as they engage and accommodate new and non-traditional entrants to the aviation ecosystem.

Resources for Editors

About ICAO

A specialized agency of the United Nations, ICAO was created in 1944 to promote the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation throughout the world. It sets standards and regulations necessary for aviation safety, security, efficiency, capacity and environmental protection, amongst many other priorities. The Organization serves as the forum for cooperation in all fields of civil aviation among its 192 Member States.

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