



ICAO Secretary General contributes to WEF2020 discussions on 21st century mobility, unmanned aircraft applications, and cleaner skies

For immediate release

Montréal and Davos, 28 January 2020 – Addressing the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos this week, ICAO Secretary General Dr. Fang Liu contributed to a range of WEF sessions on topics relating to drones and urban air mobility, medical applications for unmanned aircraft including emergency supply deliveries and epidemic control, and current and future aviation emissions reduction efforts.

A main theme highlighted throughout her contributions was the critical importance of numerous aviation benefits to governments' successful achievement in ten years' time of the *Agenda 2030* UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The ICAO Secretary General co-chaired the 2020 WEF Board of Stewards Meeting on *The Future of Mobility*, which discussed under three main topic categories how public-private initiatives can guide systemic transformation to a safe, clean and inclusive mobility ecosystem. Dr. Liu also participated at a WEF Governors Session on Urban Aerial Mobility, as well as WEF-affiliated panel entitled *The Future of Mobility: Drones and Transportation*.

At these events, Dr. Liu provided comprehensive inputs concerning air taxi and other unmanned aircraft certification to the discussions surrounding the need for the future mobility ecosystem to be clean and inclusive, and highlighted more generally that “the new aircraft and flight capabilities which are being innovated today carry the potential to revolutionize our personal and collective mobility.”

Noting that these new aviation innovations are already largely emissions free, and affordable to developed and developing nations alike, she commented on how their growth vector is highly promising and has “implications for a range of urban mobility and e-commerce applications and business models.”

Industry studies presently point to the European UA market being worth over 10 billion Euros annually in 2035, and over 15 billion Euros a year by 2050. With similarly significant and positive impacts being predicted as U.S. capabilities come online, Dr. Liu drew attention to these forecasts but also warned about the challenges their integration poses to national regulators.

“Currently State regulators are seeking to strike a balance between fostering and delivering innovation without undue delays and red tape, while at the same time ensuring a safe, effective, equal opportunity, and socially sustainable regulatory framework. We are already seeing positive examples of this, but we need to enhance our efforts even further so that all countries and regions will fully benefit.”

The 40th Session of the ICAO Assembly, held last October, directed ICAO to continue progressing the regulatory framework for the safe integration of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), including remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS), and to engage with all players – including those that are not traditionally involved with ICAO – so as to more promptly deliver their benefits to civil societies.

ICAO has already begun updating its standards to answer this call, and it has also hosted a series of ‘DRONE ENABLE’ events bringing together innovators from the private sector and regulators from the public sector to help realize effective global solutions to these challenges.

Dr. Liu also contributed UA remarks to the WEF-affiliated panel on *Medicines from the Sky*, which explored the challenges posed to expanding smaller, local drone and UA-based medical assistance efforts to regional and global scales.

The ICAO Secretary General drew attention to the fact that her agency had developed specific and freely available 'U-AID' guidance in this area for humanitarian aid and development operations, and that it was already supporting the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization and other agencies with their UA field applications, notably through the "CAPSCA" (Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation) partnership.

However, she noted that the scaling up of these and other UA air services faces a variety of challenges, including the varying legislative requirements in States, and uncertainty surrounding applicable roles and responsibilities. Here, she underscored an important role for the private sector, noting that coordination and consolidation around UAS would facilitate consensus-building among ICAO Member States.

She also highlighted concerns relating to new operators' compliance with regulatory and safety guidance, and the impact of funding shortfalls in terms of pandemic response capacities.

Dr. Liu also took part in discussions surrounding innovations such as ICAO-compliant passport-free travel and the Known Traveller Digital Identity (KTDI) during the WEF session on *Creating a Passport-Free Future*.

She agreed during the session that relieving travellers and the travel network more broadly of the need for time-consuming physical passport checks appeared to be a logical next step given current advances in digital identity frameworks, especially when they can also deliver security improvements, and stressed that ICAO has already begun working with the International Standardization Organization (ISO) on a new Digital Travel Credential (DTC) initiative for several years now.

This work builds importantly upon the accomplishments ICAO has already realized in terms of ePassport adoption by many countries, and their use of the ICAO Public Key Directory to secure their digital data.

She also explained that official national identities are established and managed on the basis of a continuum of verifiable data which governments must establish and secure, and that the passport itself, as the current end product of that continuum, would therefore still be essential as a key foundation from which citizens could seek to officially enrol in new digital identity solutions.

In her remarks to the WEF Governors Policy Session on *Clean Skies for Tomorrow*, Dr. Liu emphasized the significance of the consensus that had emerged between the private and public sector, notably in terms of delivering the first ever global emissions strategy for an entire industry sector. The strategy is comprised of a basket of measures predicated on operational improvement and technological innovations that are already rapidly progressing and being implemented. It also includes the new ICAO CORSIA offsetting solution which will help address some persisting gaps as air transport progresses toward carbon neutral growth. As of 2021, it will cover 70% of the international air traffic emissions under the ICAO CORSIA offsetting framework. On this point, the Secretary General underscored that ICAO is on track in realizing CORSIA's emissions units and other key deliverables.

Noting that emissions from international flights account for just 1.3% of annual human-induced GHG impacts today, and that modern aircraft are some 70 per cent more fuel efficient today than the first

jets to enter operation, Dr. Liu highlighted that in addition to the continuous technological innovations now being realized for airframes and aircraft propulsion technologies, new sustainable fuel alternatives held out the potential to reduce jet fuel life-cycle CO₂ emissions by up to 80%. In this regard, she called for greater private-public coordination on advancing sustainable aviation fuel development and deployment.

“As we seek to meaningfully address the sustainability of international flight, we must do so in manner which doesn’t lead to disconnecting the incredibly diverse world which generations have worked so hard to bring together, and upon which so much of global prosperity now depends,” Dr. Liu said.

At various bilateral meetings that took place on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum, Dr. Liu also discussed these issues with the African Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, H.E. Amani Abou-Zeid, the European Commissioner of Transport, Ms. Adina Ioana Vălean, and the President of the 26th Conference of the Parties to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26), Ms. Claire Perry O’Neill. The Secretary General consulted with the CEOs of prominent airports and other leaders of aviation and aviation-related businesses, including leaders of emerging aviation technologies.



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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 193 Member States.

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