



ICAO leadership urges agility, partnership, to speed up the pace of aviation innovation

For immediate release

Montréal, 8 December 2020 – Addressing the ICAO Global Symposium on the Implementation of Innovation in Aviation today, ICAO’s leaders highlighted the sector’s high reliance on innovation to address pandemic recovery and future sustainability.

“With each new decade comes new opportunities for innovation, and I anticipate the next ten years will be one of the most exciting and challenging our sector has ever faced,” remarked ICAO Council President Salvatore Sciacchitano.

“Innovators can often be surprised by the scale of the global regulatory framework which allows for international aviation, and by the detailed responsibilities they face in having their products and services assessed and integrated into our system.”

ICAO Secretary General Dr. Fang Liu underscored the extent to which innovation will be impacting security and health screening measures for governments and air travellers to enable a full air transport recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to facilitate the sector’s ability to withstand future pandemic events.

“Because we are recognizing that our overall network will face expectations of being more resilient to future pandemic threats, and being more sustainable in terms of its emissions once COVID-19 is behind us, innovation will be crucial to how we build aviation back better in the months and years ahead.”

The COVID-19 crisis environment is already accelerating developments surrounding contactless passenger screening and the digitalization of the supply chain, among other examples, and has led to airlines putting older, more emissions intensive jets out of service in favour of newer models with significantly decreased emissions.

“We must enable an ambitious decarbonization path for this sector, and I have been encouraged by the participation and commitments which were recently achieved at two ICAO events which took specific stock of new green technologies and other innovations,” President Sciacchitano noted.

With respect to the very dynamic environment of innovation driving the development of drones and other new types of aircraft and operations today, Secretary General Liu stressed that ICAO remains at the forefront of addressing the pressing and foundational global need for Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) standards, in addition to aligned solutions for unmanned traffic management in urban areas, and the safe integration of sub orbital and stratospheric operations.

“We also recognize that AI and machine learning will be making important contributions with respect to how we collect and manage the incredible amount of data our network generates, and that these technologies, in addition to new blockchain capabilities, will bring fundamental changes to how we monitor, assess, or simply administer the performance of our network,” she commented.

Dr. Liu also stressed the challenges posed to national regulators to find and retain staff resources capable of understanding and certifying the non-traditional innovations now arising in air transport, and called on countries to enhance their regulatory capacities and adapt their human resources development approaches as they modernized their aviation infrastructure.

Partnership was another area where ICAO's leaders emphasized some key near-term actions to take place, including ICAO's new agreement with the International Forum for Aviation Research (IFAR), and the establishment of a new ICAO-Industry Consultative Forum which would work to foster more effective and efficient ties with industry innovators and entrepreneurs.

The Secretary General concluded by reaffirming that ICAO is committed to providing countries with targeted assistance to support the implementation of latest innovations, whether through the training and capacity-building or subject matter expertise it can provide, or via the deployment of implementation and project management tools and resources by its Technical Cooperation Programme.

Council President Sciacchitano ended his opening remarks stating that "By building from our sector's traditional strengths in terms of consensus and cooperation, we can innovate to face down the greatest challenge international aviation has ever faced, and emerge from it more resilient and more sustainable."

ICAO's Global Symposium on the Implementation of Innovation in Aviation is taking place virtually through 11 December and will include 11 workshops organized across three time zones. It was jointly opened this morning by the Premier of Quebec, M. Francois Legault, emphasizing Quebec's important role as the home to ICAO's Headquarters as well as Quebec's reputation as one of the world's foremost centres of global aviation innovation excellence.



Resources for Editors

About ICAO

A specialized agency of the United Nations, ICAO was created by governments in 1944 to support their diplomacy on international air transport matters. Since that time, countries have adopted over 12,000 standards and practices through ICAO which help to align their national regulations relevant to aviation safety, security, efficiency, capacity and environmental protection, enabling a truly global network to be realized. ICAO forums also provide opportunities for advice and advocacy to be shared with government decision-makers by industry groups, civil society NGOs, and other officially-recognized air transport stakeholders.

[Global Symposium on the Implementation of Innovation in Aviation
ICAO's No Country Left Behind initiative](#)

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