



**Address by the  
Secretary General of the  
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)  
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar  
on the Occasion of the Celebration of the 22nd Anniversary  
of the Yamoussoukro Decision (YD)**

*(Virtual – 15 November 2021)*

1. It is my great honour to join you virtually today to celebrate the 22nd Anniversary of the Yamoussoukro Decision.
2. On behalf of ICAO, I wish to congratulate the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) on its continued promotion of this important treaty supporting air transport liberalization and open skies in Africa.
3. I also wish to express my thanks to Secretary General **Tefera** for inviting me to be part of its 22nd anniversary, and to recognize the very productive partnership which AFCAC and ICAO have realized to promote wide ranging aviation development objectives for all African countries and regions.
4. This of course is very much consistent with AFCAC's role and responsibilities as the Specialized Agency of the African Union (AU) on all civil aviation matters, and as the official Executing Agency of both the Yamoussoukro Decision and the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM).
5. Throughout the pandemic, air transport has continued to be an essential component of global society.
6. It has played a particularly critical emergency and humanitarian supply chain role, in addition to supporting a tremendous surge in eCommerce globally, and through these contributions, and many others, it has helped make the effects of COVID-19 far less severe than they might have been.
7. Now, as we begin to see steadily more promising signs of recovery and growth re-emerging, aviation can begin the task of Reconnecting the World, and assume its traditional role of being an engine of economic growth and a driver of global prosperity.

8. Recognizing the immense benefits of liberalization to air travel, tourism, and trade market recovery, ICAO organized an *Africa-Middle East Air Transport Symposium* this past August specifically focused on promoting and harnessing its benefits.
9. This virtual event brought together high-level policy makers, air transport regulators, industry representatives, aviation professionals and other stakeholders, and their work together resulted in renewed Africa-Middle East commitments to address:
  - pandemic recovery
  - regulatory harmonization
  - cross-border investments
  - proliferating air transport levies and charges
  - and the financing and modernization of aviation infrastructure.
10. We must recognize that current air transport growth in Africa could be much more robust if not for persisting regulatory barriers, financial constraints, and the continuing slow pace of air transport liberalization more generally.
11. Countries need to take action sooner than later to address these impediments to growth, and that means political buy-in at the highest levels to drive the policy and regulatory developments which are so urgently needed.
12. For example, even though ICAO has been making a clear and strong case for years on how rising taxes and levies on air traffic deliver only modest short-term gains – while stifling much more significant long-term growth – these intentional constraints on travel and trade continue to be initiated and applied by African States.
13. Other key areas for urgent State attention include liberalized market access for airlines, expanded access to capital markets, relaxed nationality requirements for airline ownership, and more overall transparency and accountability to assure effective governance.
14. It's important for everyone to remember that taking these strides to improve air transport liberalization and growth will benefit all players in the aviation value and regulatory chains in Africa.

15. From passengers to operators, and from ministries of transport to ministries of revenue, everyone stands to gain when States here assure their more widespread and committed support for the objectives of the Yamoussoukro Decision and the Single African Air Transport Market.
16. ICAO has drawn attention to many related issues at its recent World Aviation Forum events, and particularly with respect to insufficient funding for modernized infrastructure in Africa when we gathered the world in Abuja, in 2017.
17. We also continue to collaborate with African States, and applicable industry, donor, and development partners, to assure SAATM implementation proceeds in line with ICAO's *Long-term Vision for Air Transport Liberation*.
18. To augment the global recovery in air transport now emerging, ICAO also recently concluded a High-Level Conference on COVID-19.
19. Ministers and Deputy Ministers joined the heads of AFCAC and many other international organizations at this event to conduct a comprehensive review of pandemic-driven priorities for global air transport.
20. Together they formalized new commitments on border risk management and vaccination approaches, and to innovate and build air transport back better to address aviation's future environmental and operational sustainability.
21. Many other key priorities were also addressed during this intensive nine-day round of multilateralism, and all were aimed at accelerating air tourism and trade recovery and reconnecting the world.
22. What the progress at the HLCC highlighted for me in particular is that there are moments during transformations when momentum is critical.
23. The pandemic for example has presented everyone in global aviation with a unique opportunity to build back better; but we must take action now to increase the current momentum to assure that the recovery we are working for truly leads us to a new normal in air transport. This was a key driver for our High-level Conference.
24. Similarly, a big part of Africa's new normal, and the strength of its aggregate recovery, will be contingent on the actions African countries take now to liberalize their air transport sectors, and create a vibrant environment for aviation entrepreneurship and innovation.

25. The successful realization of the African Union's *Agenda 2063*, and many other objectives now being pursued, strongly rely on your skies being opened for business, and for businesses to enjoy a stable and ICAO compliant regulatory environment to operate within.
26. I look forward therefore to more and more African States signing on soon to the *Solemn Commitment* supporting Yamoussoukro and the SAATM, and to improved optimization of current recovery and liberalization synergies in Africa for the successful implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA).
27. ICAO will meanwhile continue to provide the assistance and guidance for States and industry stakeholders in Africa to achieve these outcomes, and to accelerate the restoration and revitalization of aviation, reconnect tourism and trade, and maximize the benefits of aviation for socio-economic development in your regions.
28. The ICAO Council has very recently reinforced its priority that myself and the Council President must continue to be very actively engaged toward these objectives with African air transport and government leaders, and most especially on the core Aviation Safety and Security priorities which are also so fundamental to sustainable aviation growth and development.
29. In concluding today, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to welcome your countries' continued support for important ICAO initiatives in Africa for the development of air transport and tourism, including the *Sal Declaration*.
30. I would once again express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to AFCAC for keeping the importance of the Yamoussoukro Declaration so front of mind for African States. I hope that this 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary celebration helps to reinvigorate your determination to realize a Single African Air Transport Market.
31. Thank you.