



**Introductory address  
by the Secretary General  
of the International Civil Aviation Organization,  
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar,  
to the 27<sup>th</sup> General Assembly  
of the Arab Civil Aviation Organization**

*(Rabat, Morocco, 19 May 2022)*

1. It is my great honour to join you today, here in beautiful Rabat, for this 27th General Assembly of the Arab Civil Aviation Organization.
2. Please let me extend my deepest appreciation to our hosts for the warm welcome we've received, and excellent facilities which have been provided for this important next two days of discussions and decisions.
3. I also wish to express my thanks to ACAO Director General Manar for his very kind invitation for me to join you here this week.
4. I think our in-person presence here today is a clear demonstration of the strengthening civil aviation commitment and solidarity among Arab States.
5. It is also an important acknowledgment that we are all stronger and more prosperous when we're better connected, and this is another important symbolic step in exemplifying to travelers and businesses everywhere that aviation is reconnecting the world.
6. Before the COVID-19 outbreak struck, Arab States, and especially those in the ICAO Middle Eastern Region, were well underway to reshaping global long-haul markets, while managing the world's fastest growing air passenger and cargo traffic for almost ten years running.
7. The recovery of this traffic, and of the economic potential it represents to your countries, is the first priority I wish to raise with you today, and notably in terms of the financial measures being considered and some unexpected implications of our 'new normal'.

8. The serious declines in air traffic due to the COVID-19 pandemic have created severe liquidity strains, and these have cascaded down throughout the air transport value chain with repercussions for many travel, trade and tourism markets.
  9. In addition, numerous non-aviation areas of today's far more integrated economies and supply chains are also being affected, and we can't underestimate the need for aviation regulators to also be well-staffed and well-budgeted to manage the recovery transition.
  10. These factors underscore why it's vital for governments and industry to take coordinated actions to stabilize and support the maintaining and restoration of air connectivity, while staying acutely aware that subsidies can also distort markets and have unintended consequences on competition.
  11. I spoke earlier of long-haul travel, and indeed many traditional carriers are still pursuing business models focused primarily on business and long-haul passengers.
  12. With the recovery of those segments still facing many risks, the stage may well be set for older guard carriers to face agile new low-cost competitors lured by the higher fares and bigger margins.
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13. This speaks to a second near-term priority for Arab States and global aviation, and I'm speaking now of the significant, and increasingly urgent challenge we face to aggressively decrease air transport CO2 emissions while we work to restore traffic growth.
  14. UN Secretary General Guterres has called for all means of transport to realize net-zero emissions by 2050, and aviation operators have now answered his call with detailed plans and aggressive targets.
  15. Much of our sector's near-term emissions response will rely on lower-carbon and Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF), new aircraft technologies, more efficient operations and traffic flow management, and the global offsetting being managed under the ICAO Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA).
  16. We are also now seeing a somewhat dramatic shift toward more fuel efficient narrow-body aircraft being used for traditional wide-body aircraft routes, delivering 10-15% fuel efficiency gains.

17. But ultimately aircraft have to decarbonize, and that means moving entirely to zero emission propulsion solutions.
18. States are poised to discuss a Long Term global Aspirational Goal (LTAG) for aviation emissions at our 41st Assembly in September.
19. We will look forward to the active participation and leadership of Arab States at the Assembly, as well as at the upcoming High-level meeting on LTAG, which ICAO will host in Montréal from 20-22 July.
20. I would like to appreciate here the excellent cooperation we've established between ICAO and the ACAO on environmental issues, and notably on the training and other activities supporting the State Action Plan initiative.

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21. The third key priority for aviation is to 'build back better' post pandemic, and to make this sector more resilient to future public health outbreaks and other crises.
22. In relation to public health, this will require us to focus and deliver on a fully digital and contactless passenger experience, and one which seamlessly integrates with just-as-digital passenger security, health status, and border control systems overseen by governments.
23. Taken together, these combined challenges help to explain why "innovation" and "resilience" are the key themes we've identified to motivate States at this year's Assembly, with sustainability being a key focus under each.
24. I would also like to recognize here how ICAO has already begun to undertake significant and related capacity-building work in the field of travel documents and border management in the ACAO region in the past months, and that all of these activities and successes add important momentum to these much-needed transformations. On this note, I would like to invite you to participate in The ICAO Symposium and Exhibition on ICAO Traveller Identification Programme (TRIP) will take place in-person from 13 to 15 September 2022 at ICAO Headquarters in Montréal.
25. In concluding today, I wish to appreciate how the working relationship between ACAO and the ICAO Regional Offices, in particular the Cairo and Paris Offices, has been continuously improving.

26. The diverse joint efforts we've embarked on, in terms of seminars, workshops, and training courses, have led to measurable improvements in Standard and Recommendation Practices (SARP) implementation in Arab States across *all* of ICAO's Strategic Objectives.
27. Similar successes have resulted from your joint activities supporting the implementation of the ICAO Global Plans, through the implementation of regional collaboration frameworks such as the MENA Regional Safety Oversight Organization, and the MENA AIG Regional Coordination Mechanism.
28. I would also like to appreciate here how active the ACAO has been within the framework of the MID Recovery Plan Task Force, and the related EUR/NAT actions to support the implementation of the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) recommendations.
29. Lastly I wish to emphasize ICAO's deep appreciation for the financial contributions we've received from various Arab countries, whether in support of the fulfilment of ICAO's critical pandemic response coordination role, the MID and EUR/NAT *No Country Left Behind* initiatives, and many other global initiatives and projects. These contributions are applied effectively and efficiently with prioritised and needs-based criteria under the new Council approved policy on ICAO implementation support provided to States. In this regard, I also wish to recall that ICAO has significant capacity in our Technical Cooperation Bureau (TCB) to support States in implementing the ICAO policies, plans and SARPs, together with the Regional Offices.
30. I wish to once again commend your Organization for its numerous achievements over the past 25 years, and offer you my personal assurance that ICAO will continue to collaborate fully and productively with the ACAO in accordance with the Memorandum signed by our Organizations in 2010.
31. I hope to see you all in Montréal for the important events we have upcoming at ICAO, most especially the 41<sup>st</sup> ICAO Assembly, and look forward to our discussions today and to our continued and productive collaboration in the years to come.
32. Thank you.