

Opening Ceremony
Speech of Mr. Abdul Wahab Teffaha – Secretary General
49th Annual General Meeting
Arab Air Carriers' Organization

Your Excellencies,
Mr. Chairman of the Annual General Meeting,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me at the beginning to express my sincere thanks, honor, and gratitude to His Majesty, King Mohammad VI, the King of Morocco, for bestowing his high patronage on AACO 49th AGM. I would like also to thank his representative for honoring us with his presence, along with the honorable Ministers. I wish also to thank Mr. Abdelhamid Addou, his assistants, and everyone who contributed in organizing this Arab Aviation Summit for the Future.

AACO AGM returns to Morocco for the fourth time in its history, 20 years from the last time we were here, to witness the notable development on the economic and urban levels in Casablanca on one hand, and the expansion of Royal Air Maroc on the other. This city, which is the economic capital of Morocco, has been known for its continuous evolution. It started as a small sea port in the twentieth century and evolved to become the largest metropolis in Morocco as well as being now one of the largest and most important cities in the African continent, both economically and demographically.

During that period, AACO member airlines including Royal Air Maroc evolved in tandem: AACO members' share of global international RPKs increased from just 1.6% in 1965 – the year AACO was established – to 14.3% in 2015. Consequently, the Arab air transport sector's contribution in the Arab economy reached 7.3% of the Arab GDP, which is more than twice the average global contribution of the aviation sector in the global economy, and which reflected in creating hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of jobs that wouldn't have otherwise been created without allowing this sector to expand and grow, and providing it with the infrastructure needed to realize that growth.

As such, Arab airlines evolved from regional carriers to global ones, becoming pillars of sustainable economic development in the Arab world and true global connectors of world destinations. As stated, the significant contribution of air

transport in sustainable economic development would not have happened without Arab governments' provision of adequate operational and investment environment.

As we call on Arab governments to continue providing an appropriate healthy environment for the development of this sector, we also call on governments around the world not to return to protectionism and to continue developing liberal aviation policies, a model they were the pioneers in adopting and which many governments followed in their footsteps. The pre-liberalization aviation environment proved to unbeneficial to the consumer, the national economy of countries, and even to the airlines themselves.

The Moroccan experience with regards to joining the single European Market and to opening competition is an example of the liberal policy that contributes to economic development, prioritize the customers, in addition to benefiting the airline, and which is the model that Royal Air Maroc achieved, although through a transition period that paved the way for the airline to be more competitive and meet passengers' expectation. Any revert to protectionism will be at the expense of the economy, the customer, and even that of national airlines themselves.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like at the end to extend again AACO's greatest thanks and gratitude to His Majesty, King Mohammad VI, for bestowing his high patronage on this Annual General Meeting; I would like also to thank his representative for honoring us with his presence, and his colleagues the honorable Ministers, and Mr. Abdelhamid Addou, the Chairman of this AGM, for his kind invitation. I also invite you to enjoy the Moroccan deep-rooted hospitality, which Royal Air Maroc is keen to provide you with over the next two days on the ground as well as on board their flights as it has always been the case.

Abdul Wahab Teffaha
Secretary General