

**Remarks to the Annual General Meeting
of the Arab Air Carriers' Organization
To be delivered by D/ATB on the behalf of the Secretary General
30 October 2024**

Distinguished delegates, colleagues, good morning.

It's a privilege to address you today at the Arab Air Carriers' Organization annual general meeting. Thank you to our hosts for their warm welcome and excellent organization.

I'm honored to address such an influential group. Your expertise and innovation have shaped aviation not just in this region, but internationally. Your dynamic airlines and the strategic hubs they serve are crucial role to aviation's ability to act as a catalyst for sustainable development worldwide.

This year, as we celebrate the 80th anniversary of the signing of the Chicago Convention, we have an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the significance of your work and commitment.

The theme of our anniversary celebrations is "Safe Skies. Sustainable Future." It reflects our long-standing aspirations, achievements, and dedication to achieving the zero fatality and net zero emission goals we have more recently set. It is a call to action in the enduring spirit of cooperation that has defined our industry since its inception.

For eight decades, the Chicago Convention has empowered ICAO to foster this cooperation and guide the development of global air transport. We are now taking the milestone of our anniversary to formalize our vision for the next quarter century.

ICAO's new Strategic Plan for 2026-2050 presents our commitment to ensuring that every flight is safe and secure, that aviation becomes environmentally sustainable, and that air transport delivers seamless, accessible, and reliable mobility for all. It also reinforces our dedication to leaving no country behind, ensuring our legal frameworks address all challenges, and fostering economic development that benefits everyone.

Safety and security remain our top priorities.

The remarkable safety record of commercial aviation is a testament to our collective commitment to this fundamental principle. However, we cannot afford complacency.

We must continue to enhance our global safety framework and leverage new technologies and data-driven approaches to identify and mitigate risks proactively. This is how we can drive continuous improvement.

The ICAO Global Aviation Safety Plan provides a roadmap for these efforts. We are urging all Member States and industry partners to align their national and regional plans with its objectives. In particular, the plan's objective of zero fatalities in commercial operations by 2030 will require concerted effort from all stakeholders.

In terms of security, we face evolving threats, particularly in the cyber domain. The digitalization of aviation processes brings tremendous benefits but also creates new vulnerabilities. ICAO is fully committed to implementing a comprehensive cybersecurity roadmap that integrates all Secretariat and Panel activities. Our recently adopted ICAO Cybersecurity governance framework will help guide these efforts, ensuring a coordinated and effective approach to this critical issue.

As we strive for safety and security, we must also address the pressing challenge of environmental sustainability, which is our second goal. The landmark adoption of a long-term global aspirational goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 sets an ambitious target for our industry. This goal recognizes the urgent need to address climate change while acknowledging the vital role of aviation in global development.

The success of the Third ICAO Conference on Aviation and Alternative Fuels last year in Dubai, with its adoption of a Global Framework for Sustainable Aviation Fuels and Lower Carbon Aviation Fuels, marks a significant step forward. The global target to achieve a 5% CO₂ emissions reduction by 2030 through the use of SAF is ambitious but achievable with concerted effort.

In this regard, the recently approved roadmap by the ICAO Council will guide our implementation activities, starting with the allocation of financial and human resources. The ICAO Finvest Hub, which received a positive reception during at the Dubai conference, will be a crucial platform to facilitate investment partnerships, particularly for countries and regions that do not yet have SAF production capabilities.

I would also like to highlight that 150 States and organizations are now part of ICAO's Assistance, Capacity Building, and Training programme for SAF, known as ACT-SAF. This initiative provides crucial support for SAF development and deployment, offering training, feasibility studies, support for SAF certification and policy development, and implementation of specific SAF projects for States.

Additionally, the start of the first phase of CORSIA this year, with 126 volunteer States, will be a crucial element in our basket of measures to reduce aviation's carbon footprint.

Of course, our environmental efforts go beyond alternative fuels and emissions offsetting.

We're also focusing on operational improvements to reduce fuel consumption and emissions. The Aviation System Block Upgrades framework, for instance, provides a roadmap for air navigation improvements that can significantly enhance efficiency and reduce environmental impact. This includes optimizing flight routes, implementing continuous descent operations, and improving airport surface movements.

We are of course doing all of this to help ensure that aviation can continue expanding its reach and deliver seamless, accessible, and reliable mobility for all. This is in fact the third goal under the plan.

Technological innovation will, as always, be essential to achieving this overarching objective.

Digital technologies will play a crucial role in achieving this goal. The ICAO Digital Travel Credential (DTC) initiative, for instance, aims to facilitate a more seamless travel experience while enhancing security.

Advanced air mobility provides another exciting example. ICAO is actively supporting our member states on the regulatory aspects of these emerging technologies, ensuring that innovation is fostered while maintaining the highest safety standards.

In all these endeavors, we are guided by our commitment to leaving no country behind, which has been elevated to a strategic goal in the new long-term plan. To achieve this, we've transformed our approach to technical cooperation. The Capacity Development and Implementation Support Bureau embodies our "One ICAO" philosophy, breaking down internal silos to provide more effective, tailored support to Member States.

Regional cooperation is crucial in this endeavor. The strong partnership between ICAO, IATA, AACO and ACAO, particularly through the ICAO Regional Offices in Cairo and Paris, has significantly improved the implementation of Standards and Recommended Practices across Arab States. Your support for regional initiatives in safety oversight and accident investigation also demonstrate how cooperation can effectively address shared challenge.

These regional efforts complement our global initiatives, ensuring that advancements in aviation technology and practices benefit all nations, regardless of their current level of development. By working together at both regional and global levels, we can create a more inclusive, safe, and sustainable aviation ecosystem for all.

As we face new challenges and opportunities, it's crucial that our legal frameworks keep pace. This is another strategic goal under the plan. The ICAO Legal Committee plays a crucial role in this process, and we encourage all Member States to actively participate in these discussions.

We're also focusing on helping member states harmonize national laws and regulations with international standards to ensure a consistent global regulatory environment for aviation.

Finally, we must ensure that the economic development of air transport delivers prosperity and well-being for all. Air transport is a key enabler of tourism, trade, and economic development. Our goal is to ensure that these benefits are maximized and equitably distributed.

ICAO is developing policies to enhance air connectivity. Our long-term vision for air transport liberalization offers a framework for States to gradually open their markets. This vision aligns with regional initiatives such as the Damascus Convention. We encourage A.A.C.O. to continue its strong advocacy for the Convention, which can significantly benefit the Arab aviation sector.

We're also focusing on the development of human capital in the aviation sector, ensuring that we have the skilled workforce needed to support future growth. The Next Generation of Aviation Professionals programme is a key initiative in this regard. Through the programme, we're working to attract, educate, and retain the next generation of aviation professionals, addressing the looming skills shortage in our industry.

Finally, we are providing guidance and support to States in developing their aviation master plans, ensuring that infrastructure development aligns with projected growth and technological advancements. This includes not only airports and air navigation facilities but also the supporting infrastructure needed for sustainable aviation fuels and new forms of air mobility.

The strategic goals in our long-term plan are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, reflecting the complex and integrated nature of our industry. Achieving these goals will require unprecedented levels of cooperation and innovation across the entire aviation ecosystem.

This is what I would like you to keep in mind as we approach the 80th anniversary this December. I invite all of you to join us in reflecting on our shared history and, more importantly, in shaping our collective future.

This spirit will inform our formal celebrations of the anniversary, which will take place on 4 and 5 December at the Hilton Chicago Hotel. Formerly known as The Stevens Hotel, this is where the Convention was adopted and ICAO was born.

The Extraordinary Session of the ICAO Council and the high-level roundtable discussions planned for the event will focus on the evolution of our sector, the global challenges and

opportunities we face, and the fundamental role of ICAO as a bridge builder for the further safe, secure, social, economic, and sustainable development of air transport.

In closing now, let me reiterate that together we can build a more efficient, sustainable, and inclusive air transport system that continues to connect the world and drive global progress. We can create an aviation industry that not only serves the needs of today but also safeguards the interests of future generations. The next 80 years of aviation hold immense promise, and I am confident that with our collective efforts, we will achieve heights even greater than those we've reached in the past eight decades.

Thank you once again for this opportunity to address this esteemed meeting. I look forward to our continued collaboration in the years to come, and to the remarkable achievements we will undoubtedly realize together.