



**Remarks by the Council President  
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),  
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,  
to the 76 th IATA AGM**

*(Virtual event, 24 Nov 2020)*

*Dear participants, Dear Director General and CEO of IATA, Dear Alexandre, good afternoon from Montreal!*

Your Assembly is unfortunately yet one more meeting held virtually this year due to COVID-19.

COVID-19 has had an enormous, unpredictable impact on aviation, and, in turn, this impact on aviation has imperiled businesses large and small, and put hundreds of thousands of jobs at risk.

We know that your airlines are still facing dramatically reduced load factors, and now, given a resurgence of COVID-19 across the world, you cannot serve many routes and keep the world connected.

A world not connected by scheduled flights also poses dire risks to countries' short- and long-term needs for food, vaccines, medical supplies, and many other perishable and not perishable high-value goods.

It was because of the seriousness of these risks that ICAO responded so rapidly to address the pandemic.

The special pandemic resources and the monitoring and coordination mechanisms we've established, for both operators and governments, continue to play an essential day-to-day role in keeping some aircraft moving.

At the Council level of ICAO, we established an Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) that developed the 'Take-off' recovery guidelines for air transport, and I wish to highlight the exceptional participation of IATA in their development. Additionally, the close cooperation with WHO was fundamental.

Among the several Recommendations, I wish to underline the encouragement to governments to provide financial support to the aviation industry in order to overcome this dramatic crisis.

We are currently monitoring the level of implementation of the guidelines among countries in many regions, but admittedly not quite yet to a satisfactory level.

One bright spot we have noted relates to the establishment of public health corridors.

Among the destinations where these are being established, we're seeing the first indications of traveler confidence being restored.

Another factor we've noted is that areas with higher levels of intra-regional connectivity are proving more resilient to COVID's effects.

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The new *Phase II* version of the ICAO recovery Take-off Guidelines was issued just earlier this month.

The *Phase II* guidance now recommends, among its many revised provisions, that countries assess their passenger testing options using the risk assessment tools according to the new manual which ICAO has just developed for this purpose.

The objective is to accelerate every prudent means of restoring public confidence in air travel, including through the promotion of effective tests aiming to encourage governments to relax quarantine requirements.

Governments reserve their sovereign right to address a public health threat with whatever measures necessary to protect the lives of their citizens.

At the same time, it is important that they recognize how dire the situation may become if air travel is not reasonably ensured.

And as we confront these public health challenges, we cannot forget that the safety of air transport is its most fundamental value offering.

Even in a climate of diminishing operator finances, aviation safety priorities must be continuously addressed.

At the same time, ICAO has undertaken a certain number of initiatives in order to provide airlines with flexibility with regard to the difficulties to comply with some safety regulations during the pandemic.

There is also the strong global expectation that we will build back better post-pandemic in terms of our sectoral emissions and environmental sustainability.

In this regard, I very much welcome the announcement of certain airlines to commit themselves to reach the goal of zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050!

However, while the pandemic has indirectly produced a reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in last months, ICAO has realized that the CO<sub>2</sub> offsetting mechanism of Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation or CORSIA was going to introduce an unexpected burden to airlines.

For this reason, in June the Council agreed to provide a clear safeguard, when it agreed to modify the CORSIA baseline. It determined that the value of 2019 emissions shall be used for 2020 emissions to avoid inappropriate economic burden to operators, for the CORSIA implementation during the pilot phase from 2021 to 2023.

In doing so, the Council has made a measured assessment and has come to the most reasonable solution available given the current and very extraordinary circumstances facing our sector.

Decisions like the amended CORSIA baseline remind us of our unwavering determination as a sector to fulfilling our common objectives and of our readiness to adapt to changing circumstances.

As we continue to navigate our new reality, we will need to take full measure of how new virtual meeting and coordination habits will ultimately impact long-term passenger and especially business travel demand.

We must learn the lessons this disease is teaching us, and make our global network more resilient to future pandemic threats.

This moment we now have to ‘build back better’ in aviation presents further opportunities, we should not lose sight of in other areas of air transport resilience and sustainability.

This includes all of our current objectives for aviation safety, security, environmental and economic sustainability and air navigation capacity and efficiency.

All of this will require significant amounts and new forms of aviation innovation going forward, including in terms of how regulators and standards setters assess and adopt these for global benefit.

To meet this challenge, the ICAO Council is going to establish a consultative forum with industry that would facilitate high-level dialogue on strategic objectives between the Council and industry leaders to consider innovation in aviation.

The forum would serve to help ICAO keep pace with relevant innovation that has possible implications for its priorities workload and activities. I count on IATA’s full cooperation and support for this important initiative.

In the meantime, as I look ahead, I think the greatest hope for aviation and the world at the moment lies with new vaccines.

These hold the promise of a true return to normal, and I think we can expect to see rapid and dramatic changes in public attitudes toward air travel when an effective vaccine is finally available.

Concluding, let me please appreciate here the valuable contributions of IATA to ICAO's work.

Our continued solidarity, and historic capability to work as one global aviation community, will be significantly depended upon in the months and years ahead, and ICAO is grateful to count on IATA and its members for their vision and expertise.

I wish to thank you very much for your attention and I wish you fruitful discussions and decisions.

Thank you.