



**Remarks by the Council President
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the Special Session on Aviation Recovery
for Ministers of Health, Tourism, and Transportation
in ICAO North American, Central American and Caribbean (NACC) States**

(Virtual event, 28 October 2020)

Distinguished Ministers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great honour to address you at the opening of this event. I very much appreciate the high-level turnout it has achieved.

2020 has confronted us with grave threats to the very foundations of global air connectivity and scheduled commercial air services.

As of today, it has infected over 43 million people globally, and led to almost 1.2 million fatalities.

These impacts have posed tremendous challenges for national and civic leaders.

They have also shaken the air industry, and tested its resilience, but we have also addressed them quickly and effectively in order to ensure vital operations when international air transport was practically grounded a few months ago.

The challenges being seen sector-wide were quickly appreciated by ICAO, as countries everywhere began to close their skies. Air transport has experienced a 60% decrease in traffic from January to August 2020 or 1.8 billion passengers. The most direct result of this downturn has been an over \$30 billion dollar loss in industry revenue over this period. This in turn has led to the hemorrhaging of hundreds of thousands of North American jobs, affecting people young and old who once depended on air transport, tourism, and many other aviation-related careers and businesses for their basic livelihoods.

Very quickly afterward, the severe economic repercussions of those responses began to be felt by the aviation industry and by societies at large.

Given the reliance of so many tourism destinations on dependable and regular air services, and especially those destinations in Small Island States such as we find here in the NACC, national hospitality and tourism sectors have been particularly hard hit as a result of these trends.

Our rapid response to these impacts was to establish the Aviation Recovery Task Force, or ‘CART’, which features the participation of States, industry groups, the UN World Health and Tourism Organizations (WHO and UNWTO), and appropriate international and regional organizations.

The task force quickly produced the important ‘Take-off’ response and recovery Guidelines which countries were calling for, and which are continuing to help align national pandemic responses and recovery measures globally, and here in your Region.

Using the extensive data and monitoring being realized by your states and the ICAO Secretariat, the CART task force is amending the CART guidelines with the new ‘Phase II’ version of its provisions.

The latest updates focus on the evolving technological and medical advancements in the fight against COVID-19, as well as the feedback received from CART and other stakeholders.

Recognizing the sovereignty and authority of States over their national recovery, the importance of globally- and regionally-harmonized, mutually-accepted measures cannot be overemphasized.

States are urged to follow this updated guidance to align their measures while upholding each State’s prerogative to implement additional and/or alternative mitigation measures in accordance with their specific needs and circumstances.

Collective, coordinated and devoted efforts of States and the industry to mitigate pandemic risks through a combination of measures will be the key to the restart and recovery of aviation and strengthen public confidence in air travel.

Before concluding, let me please recall how, in less troubled times, international aviation once connected our world and represented one of humanity's most remarkable successes of international cooperation.

The air transport network let billions of passengers fulfill their potential each year as true global citizens, and it played a vital role in the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of your citizens through its significant and varied economic impacts.

In appreciating that global connectivity and tourism are so fundamental to intercultural understanding, and to the peace and economic prosperity of communities all over the world, United Nations Secretary General Guterres recently went so far as to categorize this international mobility and development dynamic as a 'wonder of our world' in its own right.

Indeed, aviation leaders have a great responsibility upon them today as we confront the existential threats of the ongoing pandemic.

The Council and Secretariat of ICAO are pursuing every avenue of global leadership and coordination available to us to help countries address this pandemic and its impacts on global economic well-being.

But we must also rely strongly on the commitments of all States to assure that their local air transport industry, authorities, and capacity are duly supported through these troubling times.

Only your commitments and actions will ultimately assure that aviation can effectively fulfil its role as an engine of economic recovery which States can look to and rely upon once global connectivity is re-established.

Therefore, I invite you to take full advantage of the CART recommendations and guidelines and incorporate them into your respective national recovery plans as a matter of priority, to the benefit of your great State and the global aviation community as a whole.

Thank you.