



**Opening address by the
President of the ICAO Council,
Dr. Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu,
to the ICAO/UNOOSA AeroSpace Symposium**

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Good morning everyone.

It is a great pleasure for me to be able to welcome you all to ICAO today, and to help set the stage for this inaugural ICAO/UNOOSA AeroSpace Symposium.

Regularized outer space and upper-atmosphere flight operations represent an exciting new horizon for us to strive for. Whether for research, tourism or the pure thrill of testing the boundaries of ourselves and our planet, aero-space activity is without a doubt the next frontier for aviation, and potentially for ICAO.

ICAO has been bringing global aviation together in rooms such as this one for over seven decades now. In our halls we have debated emerging issues, forged consensus, and ultimately taken great strides... All in the name of ensuring that our shared and common sky could be optimized in the service of human flight.

And when we pause to appreciate the fact that over 100,000 scheduled flights now take-off and land at their global destinations, each and every day, the value of our work in bringing people and businesses together, and in promoting increased prosperity everywhere that aircraft fly, is very clear.

But of course flight is about much more than what it provides. At its heart it is a prime example of the pioneering spirit of human beings – our seemingly untiring will to push against the limits that confront us and to explore new frontiers.

Late last year I had the great pleasure of being able to lead a team of ICAO personnel to the Mojave Air and Spaceport in California, where modern pioneers such as Virgin Galactic and XCOR are once again pushing the limits of human flight and where it can take us.

And while practical discussions on the need to show regulatory restraint at this stage of spacecraft development were surely useful, mainly I was struck by the innovative technologies and visionary spirit of the men and women who are making all of this work a reality today... So much so that it made me wish I was a young engineer again.

I think that if I had to sum up our Mojave visit, and highlight for everyone here a couple of key points about this burgeoning area of flight, the first thing I would stress is that this stuff is really, and I mean really cool. And the second thing would be that it *will* happen in our lifetimes.

Some of you may be asking why ICAO is involving itself in outer space if this truly is a period when regulators should be taking a back seat to innovators. That's a very fair question.

In the first place I'd point out that to get to space and back, or even to get to the stratosphere or mesosphere and back, you need to go through the same airspace that airplanes fly in. This means that global civil aviation has an inherent safety concern which must be recognized. Today we manage those safety concerns by creating areas of segregated airspace, and I would point out that the FAA gave us an excellent briefing on how they're managing exactly that around the Mojave facility.

Segregating blocks or columns of airspace is fine so long as these launches occur only once every couple of weeks or so, but ultimately it's expected that spacecraft will be taking off every day and operating on much more of a point-to-point basis – potentially from urban centres.

We're still quite a long way from that today, or at least we think we are, but if recent history is any guide then we should also be anticipating a period of rapidly accelerated development sometime in the near future – just as we've witnessed with other areas of human technological endeavour. Indeed a good deal of ground-breaking work is already taking place, and you will see evidence of that in the next two days.

We need to be prepared for the day that acceleration happens, and certainly a segregation approach will no longer be sufficient.

Secondly we should acknowledge that the evolutionary path for the private space sector has similarities to that of aviation. There are lessons we have learned that you may benefit from, especially if and when earthly borders and questions of sovereignty begin to come into play.

The Chicago Convention and the ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) which support its principles ultimately provide an agreed global framework of equity and access to all who seek to use airspace for peaceful purposes. Those of us who know the Convention more intimately have been regularly surprised by how flexible and applicable it has remained – even in the face of a dramatically changing and expanding global air transport sector.

As our community now joins with yours to explore where outer space flight will take us all in the years ahead, flexibility will be an important value as we jointly seek to realize safe and sustainable outer space flight operations.

ICAO's table has always been a place where new ideas can be raised and debated openly, and where governments and the private sector can find practical areas of common ground to support their common objectives.

I hope that over the next two days you will see this process at work, and develop a deeper understanding of aviation's greatest lesson of all – that we realize our greatest achievements when we work towards them, together.

Thank you, and I wish you a very productive series of presentations and discussions.