



## *ICAO encourages liberalization and innovation to spur West African aviation pandemic recovery*

For immediate release

**Montréal, 19 March 2021** – Speaking yesterday to the virtual Ministerial Meeting on Enhancing Air Transport Connectivity and Growth in West Africa, ICAO Council President Salvatore Sciacchitano and Secretary General Dr. Fang Liu emphasized how liberalization and innovation remain key to the region’s optimized and sustainable air connectivity.

On the topic of liberalization, President Sciacchitano highlighted in his keynote address to the participants to the event, which was hosted by Nigeria’s Federal Ministry of Aviation and the International Partners for Aviation Innovation, Development and Sustainability (iPADIS), that “the restoration of air connectivity is nothing short of vital for the 15 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) member countries’ 308 million people, and for their many businesses which rely on cross-border travel.”

He also emphasized the excellent collaboration towards the enhancement of system performance and the operationalization of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) which all West African States have joined in line with the Yamoussoukro Decision, and the adoption of multilateral legal instruments to maximize air cargo’s role in national and global recoveries.

Dr. Liu underscored in her remarks how many current obstacles and challenges to West African air connectivity are systemic in nature, and being addressed through activities being coordinated through ICAO, but that “with respect to the full liberalization of air transport in Africa, we must continue to call together for greater political will, and highest-level engagement, if we are to effectively address the remaining barriers to Africa’s more open skies.”

After his update on the outcomes of the recent Phase III amendments to the ICAO Council’s Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) guidelines, which are helping West African and other countries to align their responses to COVID-19, President Sciacchitano commented on how ICAO and its Council also are keenly aware of how important innovation will be to civil aviation recovery and sustainability in the pandemic’s aftermath.

“It’s important to recognize in this respect that our sector’s future sustainability will pertain not only to the high expectations many now place on it to adopt new technologies, operations, and fuel types supporting a greener post-pandemic recovery, but also long-term health screening and hygiene solutions to help make the entire passenger experience more responsive and resilient to future pandemic events,” he stated.

Dr. Liu stressed how innovation will be so critical to every air transport stakeholder going forward, whether in government or industry, and that the ICAO Secretariat and Council are making the acceleration of effective civil aviation standardization and regulation a highest priority moving forward.

“New partnerships and groups have already been formalized to aid this process,” she stated, “and everyone is committed to ensuring that our own innovations in terms of standardization, regulation, and certification support a more responsive, safe, secure, and sustainable aviation sector moving forward.”

Other topics covered by the ICAO leaders included the High-level Conference on COVID-19 the agency is organizing for this October, the importance of Regional Safety Oversight Organizations (RSOOs) to a safe and successful restart of operations in the context of current regulatory alleviations and restrictions, and the successes continuing to be realized through ICAO's AFI Plans for safety and security even during the exceptional pandemic conditions for West African air transport.

West African States were also praised for the effectiveness of their responses to the pandemic, and it was noted that the improved coordination being achieved at present could be leveraged for further safety, security, efficiency and sustainability benefits when the pandemic has subsided.



## Resources for Editors

### About ICAO

A specialized agency of the United Nations, ICAO was created by governments in 1944 to support their diplomacy on international air transport matters. Since that time, countries have adopted over 12,000 standards and practices through ICAO which help to align their national regulations relevant to aviation safety, security, efficiency, capacity and environmental protection, enabling a truly global network to be realized. ICAO forums also provide opportunities for advice and advocacy to be shared with government decision-makers by industry groups, civil society NGOs, and other officially recognized air transport stakeholders.

[ICAO COVID-19 online information portal](#)

[The ICAO No Country Left Behind initiative](#)

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