



ICAO

**CLOSING ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE COUNCIL  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION**

**ICAO/ACI/IATA Symposium on Accessibility in International Civil Aviation  
ICAO Headquarters, Montréal, Canada**

**2-3 December 2024**

1. As we conclude our two-day symposium, it is my honour to address you on this auspicious United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities, as well as this ICAO Year of Facilitation, and to share these final reflections on our collective achievements.
2. The United Nations established this day with a noble purpose: to promote understanding of disability issues and to mobilize support for the dignity, rights, and well-being of persons with disabilities. Throughout this event, ICAO has served as the nexus of vibrant discourse and productive dialogue. We have witnessed regulators presenting their steadfast efforts to advance inclusivity through policy and implementation.
3. We have heard industry leaders candidly sharing both their commendable initiatives and inherent challenges. Most importantly, passengers with disabilities have illuminated our understanding through their personal experiences and invaluable recommendations. Indeed, our comprehension of disability issues in civil aviation has deepened immeasurably, and I am confident that we will depart from this event with renewed vigor in our shared commitment to facilitate air transport for persons with disabilities and reduced mobility.
4. In achieving the objectives of this International Day within the specific context of international civil aviation, we have realized a milestone worthy of collective pride.
5. We have welcomed 237 participants, from 37 State Delegations, 5 International Organisations and many advocacy groups, NGOs, advisory bodies and the general public. This strong attendance at our first joint ICAO-ACI-IATA symposium on accessibility shows how important this issue is to our community. The dynamic exchange of ideas and productive discussions we have had here point to more such gatherings in the future as we work together to advance aviation accessibility.

6. ICAO's recently approved new long-term Strategic Plan 2026 – 2028 includes the new Strategic Goal "Aviation Delivers Seamless, Accessible, and Reliable Mobility for All". This goal will be key to guiding ICAO's future work on Accessibility in International Civil Aviation.
7. This Strategic Goal compels us to create a travel experience where regulations, procedures and systems work in perfect harmony, delivering seamless air navigation and effortless journeys through airports and borders. Our vision encompasses all flights, passengers, air cargo and air crew, ensuring everyone benefits from easily understood, well-coordinated, predictable and affordable access to quality international travel services.
8. In his opening address, the President of the ICAO Council outlined our path forward, highlighting the dedication of the Working Group on Accessibility in International Civil Aviation. He emphasized the ICAO Assembly's mandate to develop a comprehensive strategy and work programme—a blueprint for accessibility that will serve passengers with disabilities and reduced mobility through cooperation with all stakeholders. The insights garnered from this symposium will prove invaluable in ensuring our work addresses all needs and meets or exceeds expectations. Let me reaffirm ICAO's unwavering commitment to advancing this work expeditiously and collaboratively.
9. I extend my deepest appreciation to our distinguished speakers and panel moderators, whose expertise and guidance have fostered the rich dialogue we have all witnessed. Moreover, I thank each participant for your engaged contributions, which have collectively elevated this symposium to new heights of achievement.
10. Particular recognition must be accorded to our esteemed partners at Airports Council International and the International Air Transport Association, who have demonstrated their dedication in co-organizing this symposium with ICAO. The realization of an inclusive air transport system demands seamless collaboration across all sectors, bridging governments and industry. The dedication of both ACI and IATA in co-organizing this event alongside ICAO exemplifies their commitment to mobilizing the airport and airline industries—and indeed, the broader aviation community—toward our shared global objectives.
11. As we conclude, I wish to reflect on this year's United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities theme: "Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future." The meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in decisions affecting

their lives is imperative. We have been privileged to witness their robust engagement throughout our discussions and to learn from their lived experiences of air travel. Their authentic voices of experience have enriched our understanding and strengthened our resolve to effect meaningful change.

12. And, as we head towards ICAO's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary in a few days, with the theme Safe Skies and Sustainable Future, ICAO stands ready to welcome you back for future events, whether focused on air transport accessibility or the myriad other critical topics in Facilitation within our purview.
13. I urge you to sustain this vital dialogue and to continue your invaluable contributions to governmental initiatives under the ICAO framework, to industry endeavors through ACI and IATA, and to the broader global community. Your voices must remain prominent in all decision-making processes.
14. Now, it is my honour to formally conclude this Symposium. I extend my sincere wishes for safe, pleasant, and above all accessible journeys home.
15. Thank you.