Address by the
Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization,
Dr. Fang Liu,
to the 2016 ATAG Global Sustainable Aviation Forum
(Hotel Hilton Bonaventure, Montréal
10 May 2016)

Good morning everyone. It is a great pleasure to be here today.

1. I wish to extend my gratitude and appreciation to the Air Transport Action Group (ATAG), and to Mr. Michael Gill, the Executive Director, for your dedication to sustainable aviation. .

2. 2015 was a landmark year for sustainable development, with States' commitments being enshrined in new and historic agreements such as the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development*, and the *Paris Agreement on Climate Change*.

3. Already we are seeing new priorities and programmes aligned with these agreements, and which are now helping to eradicate poverty, fight inequality, and build peaceful, inclusive, and resilient societies.

4. What does sustainabilily mean for the aviation sector?

5. Consisting of three pillars, sustainable development seeks to achieve, in a balanced manner, economic development, social development and environmental protection,

6. The role of international civil aviation in these three aspects is a fundamental one.

7. In the first place, nations must ensure the safety and security of their air transport systems by effectively implementing ICAO's Standards and policies.

8. This is the most basic prerequisite for establishing air transport's rapid global connectivity.

9. Increased air traffic leads to aviation infrastructure development, which in turn creates direct employment and generates further airport and airline operations.

10. This then leads to new supplier networks and tourism influxes, while at the same time linking distant cultures and trade flows and fostering sustainable socio-economic benefits.

11. These thriving trade and tourism economies then continue to expand, fostering regional and global growth.

12. From an overall standpoint, this dynamic is fundamental to long-term planning for sustainable development.

13. It has also been instrumental to why aviation today supports over 62 million jobs, and contributes some 2.7 trillion dollars annually to global GDP. A few minutes ago, Mr. Michael Gill had already shared with us a series of impressive figures.

14. These social and economic impacts are significant. But in 2016 the environmental pillar of sustainable development is of critical importance.

15. This means that air transport's positive socio-economic impacts must be based on responsible, forward-looking and concrete environmental commitments.

16. ICAO welcomed the Paris Agreement. The grand signing ceremony of the Paris Agreement last month is an important milestone on the road towards the timely implementation of the agreement. It also provides the aviation community with further momentum.

17. The world's eyes are now upon ICAO to complement the achievements of COP/21 with suitable commitments and progress on international emissions arising from air transport.

18. ICAO intends to realize that progress when our Member States come together for the 39th ICAO Assembly, which takes place this September here in Montréal.

19. Emissions from international civil aviation currently represent a very small fraction of the man-made contributions to global warming – roughly 1.3 per cent.

20. This figure may seem small to some of you, but at this point in the history of our planet, any contribution to global warming must be reduced.

21. This highlights why the main challenge before international civil aviation in the 21st century is growth.

22. Throughout the history of our sector, operations have expanded. Indeed they have doubled in volume every fifteen years since the 1970s.

23. This process occurs quite organically, given that when States and regions participate in the air transport system, they also substantially benefit from it.

24. ICAO forecasts have already shown us that flight and passenger volumes will double again by 2030, and this is why we began addressing the challenge of emissions growth in 2010.

25. At our 37th Assembly that year, States collectively agreed to begin pursuing a basket of measures to reduce emissions and make aviation more sustainable.

26. These measures included innovative technologies, more efficient air flight operations, the development of sustainable alternative fuels, and a global market-based measure (global MBM).

27. They also agreed to aspirational targets to improve fuel efficiency by two per cent per year, and to strive for carbon neutral growth from 2020.

28. This made aviation the first major industrialized sector to agree on sustainable environmental targets, and these were reaffirmed again at our last Assembly, in 2013.

29. These commitments by ICAO's States have been complemented by related targets adopted by industry, as you will learn much more about here today.

30. They have also been bolstered by the extensive capacity-building which ICAO has engaged in, for instance the assistance we provided to States with their aviation emissions Action Plans.

31. What all of these collective and proactive actions on the environment speak to, is leadership.

32. Aviation showed strong leadership in acknowledging the challenge of emissions, and we continue to demonstrate it through our progress on all of the mitigation objectives we are pursuing.

33. This year started, for example, with the milestone recommendation from our Council's Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP) for a new global CO_2 certification Standard for aircraft.

34. This is the very first 'global design Standard' for CO_2 emissions for any sector, and it was realized after six years of intensive work by many of the best experts in the world.

35. Approximately half of the current in-production aircraft designs will need to be improved to meet this Standard, and if they do not then they will be phased-out of production by 2028.

36. Meanwhile separate technological and operational refinements have driven a 40 per cent improvement in global aviation fuel efficiency over the past 20 years, a record which few industries from any sector can match.

37. And let us not forget the last but very promising element of the basket of measures our States are pursuing – the use of drop-in sustainable alternative fuels.

38. Five sustainable fuel production pathways have already been approved, enabling the operation of more than 2,000 commercial flights by 20 airlines.

39. And in a related development, Oslo airport in Norway became the world`s first 'bioport' recently, offering no less than 2.5 million litres of aviation biofuel annually to its users.

40. I mentioned our capacity-building work with State Action Plans earlier, and with respect to sustainable alternative fuels some 59 countries, representing 79.2 per cent of global revenue traffic kilometres (RTKs), have now indicated in their Action Plans that they will pursue investments in sustainable alternative fuels for aviation.

41. A further 37 states, representing 34.8 per cent of global RTKs, intend to engage in clean and renewable energy use at airports.

42. Technically, it would be feasible to see a complete transition to sustainable alternative fuels by the year 2050.

43. Economically and politically, it will be more complex, but that points to a further role for ICAO in driving the adoption of appropriate policy measures and a roadmap to foster commercial-scale deployment.

44. Taken together, all of these actions are helping aviation to surpass the two per cent per year fuel efficiency target we established in 2010.

45. Carbon neutral growth by 2020 is the next step in this process, and that brings us to the need for an aviation MBM.

46. The global MBM design we have been working on is one of the more complex among these diverse environmental efforts.

47. It represents a first after all – not only for aviation – but for any major industry in the world.

48. And with any pioneering achievement, there are going to be challenges.

49. ICAO has made good progress, in line with our role, in helping governments, industry groups and NGOs to discuss and address these challenges.

50. Tomorrow we will convene a High-level Meeting on this subject, and our hope is to bridge the remaining gaps in some important areas of the draft MBM Assembly Resolution text.

51. This will then permit us to deliver recommendations on a practical proposal to the ICAO Council at its next Session.

52. The last step in this process will be when our States review and hopefully adopt the finalized MBM Resolution, at our 39th Assembly this fall.

53. Achieving the Assembly's adoption will be a landmark not only for ICAO, but for global environmental governance.

54. It will also be a further important step in support of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), helping humanity to eradicate poverty, fight inequality, and build peaceful, inclusive, and resilient societies.

55. ICAO is fully committed to this process, notably as 13 of the 17 SDGs are directly linked to ICAO's Environmental Protection and other Strategic Objectives for air transport.

56. Ladies and gentlemen, it's worth repeating before I conclude today that environmental protection is key to achieving a sustainable future for air transport.

57. As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed during his visit to ICAO earlier this year, the peoples of the world are now looking to our Organization and its States for concrete environmental action post-COP/21, and we intend to deliver just that.

58. On the eve of our high-level consultation on the aviation MBM, ICAO is very grateful to have industry here today, represented through ATAG, providing additional and helpful information on the challenges and solutions now before us.

59. ATAG does some excellent work in raising awareness on just how much air transport contributes to our societies and shared prosperity, as you will very shortly discover.

60. And on that note, let me please wish you all a very thought-provoking and educational journey ahead.

61. Thank you.

— — — — — — — —