



**Opening Remarks  
by the Secretary General  
of the International Civil Aviation Organization,  
Dr. Fang Liu  
to the ICAO/Pacific Island States  
Video Teleconference**

*(12 May 2020)*

*Good morning everyone,*

1. I wished to start-off today by expressing my appreciation to Regional Director Mishra for arranging this meeting.
2. This international coordination is essential and in keeping with ICAO's global leadership, especially during times of crisis, and its my hope that your discussions here will begin driving some important momentum toward a successful Pacific Island air transport recovery from COVID-19.
3. While it's difficult to look beyond immediate national concerns in such times, please be reminded that ICAO and other UN organizations are critical to an effective global response during times of global crisis.
4. Please let me therefore reiterate that we are here for you, our Member States, and that we're doing everything in our capacity today to accelerate the recovery of your air transport sectors.
5. As we've learned after decades of global air connectivity generating significant new sources of tourism and trade revenue among Pacific Island economies, we all need each other to be prosperous and sustainable.
6. For your recoveries to be truly successful, therefore, your goal here today should be to assure not only your State's local recovery, but also the recoveries of your neighbours and their neighbours.

7. And for this cooperation to fully do its part, all parties must be involved on a clear and coordinated basis, whether government or non-government, regulator or operator.
8. ICAO is grateful to be serving as a platform for this much needed international response among Pacific Island States, and we'd be further grateful for some prioritization toward the remittance of any currently outstanding ICAO financial commitments so that we can continue to play our part.
9. If a common set of goals is not established among all the stakeholders being negatively impacted by COVID-19, the strength we normally derive from our diversity could quickly devolve into unhelpful duplication and inefficiencies.
10. The Pacific Islands are a unique and diverse region, and each of your countries is confronted by just-as-unique challenges with respect to their limited natural resources, narrow-based economies, and the extended distance from major markets.
11. All of these factors affect local economic growth, prosperity, and volatility, and they highlight as well your increased vulnerability, individually and collectively, to external shocks such as climate change or this new pandemic.
12. These external forces will continue to be major challenges for your islands through 2020 and beyond, and as I noted earlier a successful response will need to be well-coordinated and international in scope to be truly sustainable.
13. Another important consideration we're currently faced with is that jump-starting the aviation engines of your economies will need to be part of a broader recovery consensus in your governments, and therefore subject to highest-level political buy-in.
14. I would therefore encourage your continued efforts in highlighting to your respective national ministries that a return to full air transport connectivity is critical to successful COVID-19 recoveries.
15. As you will have seen from the recent State Letters and news releases ICAO has issued, we've been very active throughout the COVID-19 period on numerous fronts relating to public health,

operational safety measures, maintaining critical air cargo supply chains globally, the expediting of humanitarian and repatriation flights, and other urgent priorities.

16. Some of these developments will now be explored in further detail as you begin your meeting together, and afterward you will each have an opportunity to share your local experiences and begin considering the next steps in re-establishing Pacific Island air connectivity.
17. ICAO is very grateful to be able to host you for this virtual session, and it's instructive for us all I think that these online meetings can permit such cost-efficient interaction between us.
18. That will be another item for us to build on together moving forward, and on that note I will wish you all a very productive session.
19. Thank you.