

**Oral Statement to be delivered by His Excellency Lyonpo Chandra Bdr Gurung, Minister, Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, Royal Government of Bhutan during the High-Level Ministerial Segment on 17th April, 2025**

**ICAO Facilitation Conference 2025 (FALC 2025)**

**Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I bring warm greetings from His Majesty the King and the people of Bhutan.

It is a great pleasure for me to join this esteemed gathering at the ICAO Facilitation Conference 2025. At the outset, I extend my sincere gratitude to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the Government of the State of Qatar for hosting this important event, bringing together global leaders and experts in aviation facilitation.

Bhutan, a small Himalayan nation has always prioritized sustainable and responsible growth in all sectors, including civil aviation. We recognize that aviation plays a pivotal role in connectivity, economic development, and international collaboration. As a landlocked country, air transport is not just a convenience but a necessity, linking Bhutan to the world and fostering tourism, trade, and investment.

**Enhancing Aviation Facilitation for a Resilient Future**

In recent years, Bhutan has made significant strides in strengthening aviation security and facilitation. We have implemented measures to streamline passenger processing, enhance border security, and improve infrastructure at our international and domestic airports. Our commitment to ICAO's facilitation standards ensures that our aviation sector remains resilient and responsive to global challenges. Paro International Airport, Bhutan's primary international gateway, is renowned for its challenging approach and breathtaking scenery. However, its facilitation services have significantly improved over the years. The **introduction of modern security screening, improved check-in systems, and better baggage handling facilities** has enhanced passenger experience. Additionally, efforts are ongoing to expand

terminal capacity and enhance safety standards to ensure that Paro Airport meets international aviation requirements while preserving Bhutan's environmental and cultural integrity.

While Paro remains the main hub, **regional airports like Bumthang, Gelephu, and Yonphula** are also being developed to improve domestic air travel. These airports facilitate easier movement within the country, benefiting local communities, businesses, and emergency medical evacuations. Strengthening regional connectivity will not only boost tourism but also contribute to balanced socio-economic development across Bhutan.

However, we are mindful of the evolving landscape of air transport facilitation. The post-pandemic era has highlighted the need for harmonized policies that enhance security while ensuring the seamless movement of passengers and cargo. Bhutan is committed to working closely with ICAO and regional partners to implement best practices in digital identity management, biometric screening, and contactless processing to improve efficiency and safety.

### **Sustainability and Innovation in Air Transport**

Bhutan is committed to sustainable and eco-friendly airport development. The integration of green technologies, such as energy-efficient terminal buildings and waste management systems, aligns with our development philosophy of Gross National Happiness. Additionally, advancements in **e-visa processing, digital ticketing, and improved air traffic management** are helping to streamline operations while ensuring the highest levels of security and efficiency.

Bhutan has long championed sustainability, and our aviation policies reflect this commitment. As the world moves toward greener and more efficient air transport solutions, Bhutan supports ICAO's initiatives on carbon offsetting, alternative fuels, and environmentally responsible airport operations. We believe that innovation and sustainability must go hand in hand to create a more resilient aviation sector.

## **Strengthening Regional and International Collaboration**

Aviation facilitation is not just a national concern—it requires global cooperation. Bhutan remains committed to enhancing regional connectivity through multilateral partnerships. We urge ICAO and fellow member states to continue fostering cooperation in areas such as information sharing, capacity building, and technology transfer.

We also call for greater support to smaller states, particularly landlocked developing countries, in adopting ICAO's latest facilitation initiatives. It is only through inclusivity and shared responsibility that we can create a more secure, efficient, and people-centered aviation industry.

## **Conclusion**

As we convene at this critical juncture, let us reaffirm our collective responsibility to enhance facilitation, resilience, and sustainability in global aviation. Bhutan stands ready to contribute to ICAO's vision and work alongside international partners to create a safer, more seamless, and more sustainable aviation future.

Once again, I extend my gratitude to ICAO and the Government of the State of Qatar for this platform of collaboration and progress. Let us work together to ensure that air travel remains a force for global connectivity, economic prosperity, and sustainable development.

Thank you, and Tashi Delek!