



**Remarks by Taleb Rifai**  
**Secretary General, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**

**ICAO Worldwide Air Transport Conference,**  
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Thank you very much, Secretary-General, for your kind words. I am delighted to be here for this Symposium and for the Air Transport Conference.

I would like to thank ICAO for including the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in this Symposium as a representative stakeholder in air transport, alongside bodies such as ACI, CANSO, IATA, IBAC and TIACA.

I am also very pleased to acknowledge and thank the representatives of the tourism sector that join us today - Mr. Marthinus van Schalkwyk, Minister of Tourism of South Africa and Member of UNWTO's Executive Council; Mr. David Scowsill, President and CEO of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC), and Mr. Chris Lyle, UNWTO Representative to ICAO. And of course, all those in the aviation industry, without whom there would be no tourism as we know it.

Dear Friends,

The increased recognition of the interdependence between air transport and tourism is very much due to the vision of my good friend Raymond Benjamin and of ICAO's Director of the Air Transport Bureau, Mr. Boubacar Djibo. I must thank you both for such important strides.

And why are these steps so important? Well, air transport and tourism, which includes those travelling for leisure but also for business or for any other purpose such as visiting their families and friends, are intrinsically linked.

In 2012, over one billion international tourists travelled the world. Over half these tourists arrived at their destination by air, with much higher proportions in long-haul destinations, particularly landlocked and island countries.

The extraordinary growth of international tourism over the last decades – from 25 million tourists in 1950 to over one billion in 2012 – is as much due to advances in air transport as to the rise of the middle class, the growing wealth in industrialized and emerging countries, and the forces of globalization. By the same token, the growth of aviation is fundamentally connected to the expansion of tourism, an expansion set to continue - by 2030, UNWTO forecasts international tourists to reach 1.8 billion, 52% of which will arrive at their destination by air.

Dear Friends

This is an historic moment. Only by acting together can we ensure that aviation and tourism take the lead in promoting a more balanced and sustainable future.

From our side, UNWTO is fully committed to fostering closer cooperation and collective action between air transport and tourism as we truly believe this is to our mutual benefit and to that of our Members States, of our economies and of our societies.

Issues such as climate change, consumer protection, taxation, infrastructure development or the regulatory framework can surely be tackled in a more effective manner when addressed in a collective effort.

Many of these topics are part of the Agenda of the Air Transport Conference as well as of the Programme of today's Symposium. It is my pleasure to leave it in the very capable hands of my tourism colleagues to further elaborate on this new perspective during this event.

I wish all participants every success.

Thank you. Merci.