



**Introductory remarks by  
ICAO Secretary General  
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar  
to the  
High-Level Session of the UNWTO  
“Future of Tourism World Summit”**

*(Barcelona 26 – 27 October 2021)*

1. Let me please begin by thanking Mr. Pololikashvili and Mr. Brown for their kind invitation to address this Session.
2. International aviation continues to face many challenges due to the pandemic, but it also continues to connect our world when societies need it most.
3. Air travel recovery has been uneven to-date, with domestic travel being far more robust owing to domestic travelers not facing border complications.
4. International demand has been admittedly less encouraging, but what we are clearly seeing in the overall trends is that people want to fly, and that those who can are very confident about the health and safety aspects of the air passenger experience.
5. This confidence is being borne out by the latest national data, and I think that as border risk management steadily improves we could see a more accelerated return to profitability for travel markets than is currently expected.
6. To help add to that momentum, ICAO recently concluded its High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC).

7. This is a very critical time for governments to be reviewing and refining their pandemic restrictions on international air travelers, and we were encouraged that ministers committed at the Conference to using adaptable risk management strategies guided by the latest scientific evidence.
8. They also agreed to promote an inclusive, WHO-compliant approach, including by alleviating requirements for fully vaccinated or recovered passengers and by implementing specific travel health corridors.
9. Governments must now be proactive in actioning these results, adapting their local measures to align with the actual levels of risk arising from their aviation systems.
10. The costs of not doing so are being felt by millions of people and thousands of small businesses all over the world today, and their futures are in our hands.
11. One of the key challenges we face in addressing country-to-country COVID variations concerns the persisting disparity in global vaccine access.
12. Simply put, vaccinations save lives and open borders. They're the key to putting COVID-19 behind us, and to launching a sustainable new era of connectivity and profitability for the global travel and tourism sectors.
13. This speaks to the urgent need for improved access to vaccines for all countries and regions, and for accessible and interoperable digital health certification solutions.
14. Ministers at our conference agreed that countries would continue to work through ICAO to resolve this global interoperability challenge.
15. They also endorsed that related solutions must be accessible to all, and fully protect traveler privacy and personal data.

16. This focus on innovation for future resilience and sustainability was a key characteristic of the High-Level Conference.
17. Participants were keenly focused on building back better, and underscored the importance of new technologies to realize a healthier and more efficient contactless air travel experience.
18. Digital and other technological innovations were also highlighted as a key means for governments to become more capable and aligned when addressing future pandemic crises.
19. With COP/26 front-of-mind for all concerned, ministers at the HLCC also formally recognized the challenges posed by climate change to the long-term resilience, sustainable development, and future growth of the aviation sector.
20. All of us today must be unwavering in our dedication to the reduction and elimination of climate-harming emissions, and everyone in the aviation community has been greatly inspired by the recent cross-industry commitment to Net-Zero air transport by 2050.
21. This is the first such commitment adopted by an entire global industry sector, and you'll be learning more about the pioneering innovations now helping our sector to reach that goal during the closing session today on *The Future of Travel and Civil Aviation*.
22. Another key outcome of our High-level Conference was its recognition of the need for economic and financial support to sustain current operations and ensure the provision of essential services.
23. Bringing a complex global network back to full capacity is quite obviously a massive undertaking, and ICAO is assisting industry today with essential guidance and resources to support the safe resumption of air operations in regions where flights have become inactive.

24. We're also training national regulators on how to work more effectively with their public health authorities so that operations return to normal with *minimum inconvenience* for the traveling public.
25. Reconnecting the world and building back better for resiliency and sustainability are significant challenges.
26. The responsibility to meet them requires that we all become more dynamic and transformative, but at the same time there is a profound global consensus and an incredible level of excitement and energy being devoted to finding solutions.
27. The rate of progress being seen makes me extremely optimistic about the future we are discussing here today, and I am just as optimistic about the solidarity and ambition of the air transport sector as we partner with tourism stakeholders to keep this world and its peoples connected, and united.
28. Thank you.