

Air transport resilience and efficiency through leadership and cooperation

Presented by ACAO

Transport plays an essential role in the development of nations by loosening the isolation of regions, and enhancing social and economic exchanges through people and goods movement facilitation. This development contributes in producing wealth and employment opportunities, whether in industry or in the transportation infrastructure system. Today, transport plays an important part in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations for 2030.

Air transport, which is an intrinsic part of this system, is distinct from other means of transport by its speed, efficiency, regularity and high level of safety, drawing on international standards at the institutional, organizational, financial and technical levels. However, if these basic principles persist, the air transport system is called to continuously adapt to the international environment developments.

During the past decades, the air transport sector has recorded great growth despite the impact of the tragic events that the world has known, such as the awakening of volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, epidemics, terrorist acts, increased fuel prices, financial and economic crises, revolutions, and social movements ... that many countries have gone through.

These events contributed to the emergence of a new scene characterized by:

- The disappearance of major airlines.
- Strengthening alliances between traditional companies that are no longer able to deal on their own with the constraints of the market.
- The emergence of low-cost airlines and their increasing dominance in the short and medium term thanks to their attractive pricing policy.
- The emergence of a trend that tends towards privatizing airport and air navigation services.
- The competition provided by the liberalization policy practiced by countries with a high share in international air transport.
- Environmental protection requirements.
- New restrictions related to consumer rights protection.
- Increased security and safety measures.

Thus, the air transport industry showed maturity and great ability to adapt to various risks and succeeded in surviving and reaching increasingly large sectors of the population thanks to lower prices and to leveraging new information and communication technologies.

✓ **The international civil aviation framework designed to curb the spread of epidemics**

Today, as we face the repercussions of the Coronavirus epidemic, which has claimed the lives of many people, and caused unprecedented damage to our societies and economies, the first of which was the air transport sector, we recall what our countries have done believing that the international civil aviation sector can help create and maintain friendship and understanding between nations of the world and its peoples, and in an effort to promote cooperation among them, have agreed on principles and arrangements establishing the provision of safe and orderly international civil aviation, and the establishment of an international network of air transport.

Among the arrangements made in this framework is the spread of diseases prevention, as Article 14 of the Chicago Convention affirms the consent of each contracting state to take effective measures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases that the contracting states decide to commonly define from time to time, and that, to this end, the contracting states maintain continuity in close consultation with bodies concerned with international regulations related to health procedures that apply to aircraft. This consultation shall take place without prejudice to the implementation of any existing international agreement in this regard, to which the contracting states are parties.

Resolution No. 14-40 on mitigating the spread of disease through means including, inter alia, aircraft disinfection, vector control methods and the importance of the Collaborative Arrangement Program for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in International Aviation (CAPSCA) issued by the General Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization at its fortieth session, urging countries to take measures, including membership in the Collaborative Arrangement Program for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in the Field of International Aviation (CAPSCA), and work to activate the recommendations contained in the publications and guidance materials issued by ICAO, the World Health Organization and the "CAPSCA " program.

The global outbreak of the Corona epidemic represented an opportunity to mobilize all components of the international system to manage the crisis first, and to develop a global approach secondly, in which the international civil aviation sector, with all its components, including civil aviation authorities, global and regional organizations, as well as the air transport industry sector, was involved for the recovery of the civil aviation sector.

The Council's Aviation Sector Recovery Task Force (CART) adopted from the outset basic principles in its approach to laying down measures to restore air transport activity, including the second principle, which affirms that supporting the safe, secure and sustainable recovery of the global aviation sector is in the best possible way. Through an internationally coordinated approach that relies on working as a single aviation team and showing solidarity, and on the need to integrate ICAO plans and those of states, international and regional organizations and industry. Should national and regional needs require different approaches, States should coordinate responses to the greatest extent possible, in line with ICAO standards, plans and policies.

After preparing two packages of recovery measures, the ICAO Council adopted during its 222nd session last March the third version of these recommendations and procedures, the most important of which is standardizing health-testing certification by countries by issuing safe, reliable and interoperable documentary evidence internationally, and encouraging aircraft crews to undergo vaccination. With the possibility of exempting crew members who have been vaccinated or have a history of infection with the COVID-19 virus confirmed by laboratory testing programs, and proof of vaccination in an approved national registry provided that countries issue a safe and globally interoperable guide.

As for public health corridors, the latter are implemented between countries based on mutual recognition of public health mitigation measures implemented by each party on one or more paths, with states being encouraged to exchange information through the ICAO Public Health Corridor model.

These corridors are the subject of a stand-alone memorandum of understanding due to their exceptional and temporary nature, and cannot be considered an amendment to the air services

agreements or as a reason for resuming future negotiations on the latter. The inclusion of a clause on registration with the International Civil Aviation Organization (with reference to Article 83) is at the discretion of the parties.

ICAO has developed an application that provides a legal and operational model framework for the development of bilateral or multilateral arrangements according to the needs of each country and epidemic situation. This application facilitates the development of a mutually recognized safety risk management approach on the pathways identified under this arrangement.

This will help our countries to reopen international flights again, at a time when it is imperative to bypass the constraints that hinder the process of immunity against Covid 19 virus through the provision of vaccines.

Here, I would like to point out that our region was the first to emphasize the need for consultation and coordination of efforts to confront this crisis, under the umbrella of the International Civil Aviation Organization and within the framework of the CART Team. The Arab Civil Aviation Organization, as a specialized Arab Organization under the Arab League, aims to strengthen cooperation and coordination among member states. It has undertaken several initiatives at the level of civil aviation authorities in these countries, as well as at the level of the councils of Arab transport ministers, tourism ministers, and health ministers of the League of Arab States, the first of which was to take decisions and actions that support airlines, before the end of March 2020.

We have also suggested, from the start, a global plan to restart and restore air transport pursuing the following goals:

- Reassuring passengers and governments of the safety of air transport;
- Prevent fragmentation of health measures and their negative impacts on operational sustainability and travel experience;
- Ensure an orderly return to service of the air transport when the travel restrictions end.

In order to achieve these goals, two important axis must be addressed in a continuous and collaborative manner:

1. Globally coordinated health measures that ensure the transmission of the virus is mitigated while at the same time reducing the compliance burden on air transport passengers and stakeholders.
2. Continuous risk assessment and development of scenarios at the national and regional levels, to determine the resources and infrastructure and their impact on return to service.

- ✓ The importance of regional blocs

Border closure accounts as one of the precautionary measures adopted by countries to confront the outbreak of the new Corona virus (COVID-19), which affected the air transport sector, especially for those countries among Arab countries that are important markets for air and tourism activity. The air transport activity, in the latter, was strongly affected compared to other countries operating within the framework of regional blocs with an integrated air transport market. An example is the single European air transport market, which represents more than two-thirds of the total air traffic of the European Union, and there is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), where the unified market for air transport activity for this group constitutes about 40% of the total traffic. In many countries this led to the idea of establishing regional blocs in order to create similar markets,

including Latin America and Africa. The latter is now working to activate the unified African air transport market, which is a pioneering project within the African Union's agenda 2063. Its launch was given on the sidelines of the 30th summit The African Union, as this initiative aims to establish a unified market in the field of air transport in Africa, and will provide about 9.8 million jobs within the year 2036, with undeniable impact on the gross domestic product, which is expected to reach 159 billion dollars within the same year.

Arab countries, in turn, were the first to establish the Arab air transport market within the framework of the Damascus Agreement to liberalize airspace, especially since the Arab world occupies a strategic position between Europe, Asia and Africa. The Middle East and North Africa region is today the fastest growing region in the world in terms of air transport, investing huge amounts of money on Airlines and airport infrastructure, to keep this momentum, by giving a strong impetus encouraging Arab countries to lift operational restrictions on the basis of a bilateral approach and liberalizing air transport services to reach a unified market for air transport, by:

- Expanding the signing, joining and ratification of the 2004 multilateral agreement (the Damascus Agreement) for the liberalization and its implementation, including economic rules and legal guarantees, which would enable Arab carriers to work with expansion plans,
- Encouraging Arab countries to sign, join, and ratify the amended agreement for the “Exchanges of Customs Tax and Duties Exemptions on the Activities and Equipment of Arab Air Carrier” because of their benefits and gains they represent for Arab Air Carrier in terms of contribution and support to the activities of these carriers.
- Supporting continuous cooperation with international and regional organizations for coordination (ICAO - ECAC - LACAC - African Union ... etc.)
- Permanent and continuous coordination with the civil aviation authorities in the Arab member states to coordinate positions and efforts that support Arab carriers operation.
- Encouraging Arab countries to sign and join international agreements and protocols that would support the development of legal frameworks that contribute to the growth of the operation of Arab carriers.
- Encouraging the use of international inter-transportation means.
- Establishing an emergency plan for the optimal use of the actual achievements.
- Enhancing cooperation and integration between air carriers in terms of training and employment.

✓ Communication

The path to establishing a more resilient aviation system is based on comprehensive communication, including the establishment of close, transparent and continuous communication between all stakeholders, as well as towards the public. Coordinated and clear information and an emphasis on safety, security and operational integrity of aviation systems will enhance compliance with actions taken to reduce risks and help develop resilience to crises while addressing recovery and demand growth.

International and regional organizations, international civil aviation and public health authorities, in cooperation with the aviation sector, should communicate clearly and effectively to enhance

travelers' confidence and help people understand how to contribute to the safety of a traveler's flight, and digital platforms should be used wherever possible.

Since the beginning of the outbreak of the new Corona epidemic (COVID-19), the concern of all involved stakeholders, regardless of the diversity of their fields of specialization, is to enhance public confidence due to the proliferation of rumors and the large number of news that terrorize the latter. In light of the skepticism and the decline of confidence resulting from the news related to "Corona", It was necessary to think about ways to restore the public's confidence, by highlighting reports of interest and concern to the public, and through more effective communication based on clear goals that are mainly reflected in:

- Ensuring the transfer of relevant, consistent, accurate and up-to-date information to all stakeholders and states;
- Supporting the implementation of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) provisions, recommendations, guidance materials and the outputs of the ICAO Council Working Group for the recovery of the aviation sector (CART) as approved by the ICAO Council.
- Help get commitment at all levels.

These goals are likely to change through the evolution of the new Corona epidemic (COVID-19), with the development of measures taken by countries and national and regional efforts to limit its spread, as well as with the recommendations received from the World Health Organization.

A thorough understanding of the role played by other, non-aviation national organizations such as public health authorities, military authorities, customs and immigration authorities as well as establishing coordination is critical and fundamental to ensuring that strategies are effectively and smoothly implemented.

Moreover, preventive measures must be consistent at all levels: before the airport; at airport facilities; Personnel and crew interacting with passengers, on board the aircraft, upon transit; after the flight and upon arrival at the destination.

Providing future travelers with information about what needs to be taken into account regarding covid 19 symptoms is crucial, as promotional materials must ensure that passengers are not only aware of the applicable preventive health measures but are also fully committed to them.

Enhancing traveler's confidence in aviation is of utmost importance and is the key to the recovery of the sector. This confidence consists in the following elements:

- Take effective and efficient measures to protect passengers and flight crew interacting with passengers, allowing the health risks associated with COVID-19 to be mitigated;
- Ensure that available scientific data are constantly reviewed;
- Measures and procedures in place to treat the response to any case showing symptoms of the disease to avoid danger to other passengers.
- Passengers' experience in honest and open interaction on behalf of the authorities regarding measures taken to mitigate risks associated with COVID-19;

- Receive clear, detailed and supportive information on civil aviation safety measures, that are adapted to various groups in order to meet different needs;
- Obtaining realistic and scientific guidance about one's actions to meet his own responsibility related to the health and safety of others.

✓ Stakeholders

Coordination of actions at the global and regional levels is necessary to enhance public confidence, especially the air traveler, as stakeholders and industry partners who represent both international and regional organizations, civil aviation authorities, airlines, airport operators and service providers (ground handling, cleaning and catering companies), public health authorities and other companies from various business sectors that use air transport frequently (management consultants, tourism and entertainment agencies etc.), politicians and policymakers to ensure that their needs are recognized by aviation authorities, national regulatory bodies to take advantage of industry expertise as appropriate. All of these parties should In cooperation with the aviation sector, communicate clearly and effectively with each other to enhance travelers' confidence and help people understand how to contribute to the safety of their travel journey. They will also pursue strategies and initiatives to implement the aviation industry and strive to achieve synergies whenever possible to ensure the effective and timely implementation of recommendations and guidance materials for the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization CART working group (CART).

Countries providing material support to the civil aviation sector in the current circumstances is necessary, especially since the sharp decline in demand for air transport, to which travel restrictions are added, has had multiple negative effects, including pressures on revenues and cash flows for all stakeholders. Examples include, but not limited to, airlines, airports, and air navigation as well as service providers and aircraft manufacturers. However, concerted efforts to address the actual problems related to the precautionary measures on air travel are the guarantee of the recovery of this sector and support its role in achieving the sustainable development goals.

✓ Coordination and cooperation

The main objective of coordination and cooperation activities is to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences, including best practices, challenges and lessons learned, between countries and regions. It also aims to avoid duplication of efforts between all aviation stakeholders and to enhance cooperation and synergy among them whenever possible.

In this context, the civil aviation authorities are invited to continue holding regular meetings with the International Civil Aviation Organization at the level of the General Secretariat and relevant regional offices and with regional and international organizations and Member States to support the exchange of information on actions taken, experience, best practices, challenges encountered, and initiatives implemented, successes, and help required. This is in order to unify positions and visions, especially as we look forward to holding a high-level international conference on recovery in the civil aviation sector, next October.