



39th Plenary (Triennial) Session (ECAC/39)

Videoconference, 12 July 2021

Opening speech by the President of ECAC

Dear President of the ICAO Council,

Dear Secretary General of ICAO elect,

Dear Director General for Mobility and Transport of the European Commission,

Dear Directors General of Civil Aviation,

Dear colleagues and friends,

Good morning everyone,

(Acknowledgment and welcome)

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to welcome you today to the 39th Triennial Session of the European Civil Aviation Conference.

Three years ago, we met at the European Parliament in Strasbourg for the 36th ECAC plenary session. I remember that we followed the football world cup on the TV screens during the dinner and there you could really see almost everyone finding a spot to have the best view. Three years later we just saw yesterday the final in the European championship between England and Italy. Congratulations to

Today, unfortunately, for the first time ever we are unable to organise this meeting in Strasbourg, the place where ECAC held its inaugural session at the end of 1955, and where we have traditionally met for our triennial sessions.

However, it is impressive to see so many participants in this first (and I hope last) virtual Triennial Session of ECAC: Directors General of ECAC Member States and of many other ICAO States, ICAO Council members, representatives of our sister organisations: ACAO, AFCAC and LACAC, as well as of other international and regional organisations, including the European Commission, EUROCONTROL, EASA, ICAO and WAEMU, to name only a few. I am also particularly pleased to welcome representatives of industry organisations, with whom ECAC has close and valuable cooperation links: ACI EUROPE, A4E, IATA and CANSO to name only a few.

It is also a privilege for ECAC to welcome the President of the ICAO Council, Mr Salvatore Sciacchitano, the newly appointed Secretary General of ICAO, Mr Juan Carlos Salazar, as well as the Director General of Mobility and Transport of the European Commission, Mr Henrik Hololei.

Thank you all for joining us today in this important event for ECAC.

(Background information)

The ability to adapt to change, to be creative and to find innovative and efficient solutions to rapidly evolving challenges are the key attributes that define not only the European Civil Aviation Conference and its 44 Member States but also the entire aviation sector. The last few years have been extremely challenging, and the economic and financial crisis which has impacted our industry has been the worst in our history.

Restart, Recovery and Resilience have been the motto of all our actions and efforts since February-March 2020. From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, ECAC has been committed to supporting its Member States by hosting regular European coordination meetings, bringing together the Directors General of the 44 ECAC Member States, the European Commission, EASA and EUROCONTROL. Held every three to four days at the beginning of the crisis and recently, once every three-four weeks, these meetings enable the exchange of information on latest national developments, discussion on economic and financial relief measures for all stakeholders at both national and European levels, the impact on security and facilitation measures, the need for communication on the critical role of civil aviation to our economies. These meetings also enabled us to look at challenges and solutions that needed to be urgently addressed for the benefit of States, the aviation sector and ultimately the travelling public. Aviation has also demonstrated throughout this crisis the crucial role it plays in securing the distribution of essential goods

More than ever **coordination and harmonisation** of measures have been at the heart of our actions and efforts, despite the many challenges. More than ever before, ECAC Member States worked to coordinate their measures within Europe, working closely with national health authorities, and also contributing to the ICAO CART. I can only reiterate the strong need for cooperation among all stakeholders, civil aviation authorities, public health authorities and industry, to ensure a fully coordinated approach and mutual recognition of measures, regionally and globally. Only then will the sector be able to fully recover.

(Conclusion)

The main challenge for ECAC Member States was to keep the aviation system afloat and now we must concentrate our efforts to enable the sector to recover from the crisis in a sustainable manner. And when I talk about **sustainability**, this is not only about economic sustainability. Yes, we will need to look at the sharing of risks and re-think our concepts and rules about the financial fitness of the aviation system, so that it is better prepared to resist and overcome such crisis in the future. Business models will most likely be adapted. But when I speak about sustainability, I also think about the opportunity that this crisis is offering us to innovate, and build a future for aviation which is, and must be, sustainable from an environment perspective. This crisis represents a game changer, and despite all the difficulties faced by the people in our sector and our passengers, the opportunities that this crisis has created for the future shall not be missed, this would be a mistake and I know that the aviation industry is fully committed to do its part.

I also strongly believe that In the years to come, we must continue to exert our combined efforts to address the challenges affecting the European civil aviation sector, and that together we shall continue to improve the passenger experience of flying and to have the political recognition of the added value of civil aviation to our economies and to our European values, such as the freedom of movement.

Aviation is global and reaches everywhere, we must therefore work together to facilitate the smooth transportation of people and goods. ECAC remains committed to strengthen its cooperation with ICAO and other international organisations dealing with civil aviation, with our sister regional organisations and other international key partners.

Without further ado, it is now my pleasure to declare open the ECAC's thirty-ninth Triennial Session, and to invite the President of the ICAO Council to address our assembly.

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