

Statement by the Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation Mrs. Aishath Nahula at the 41st ICAO Triennial Assembly.

Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem,

Alhamdulillahi Rabbil 'Alameen. Wassalatu Wassalamu Ala Rasoolillah. Wa 'ala Aalihi Wa As-habihi Waman thabia' hum bi ihsaanin ilaa yaumiddin.

Madame President, President of the ICAO, Secretary General, and Distinguished Delegates.

Assalaamu Alaikum and wish you a very Good Afternoon!

1. The Maldivian Delegation would like to convey, our warmest greetings from the people of the Maldives to all the attendees.
2. We would like to express our sincere appreciation to ICAO, especially the Council President and the Secretary General for their excellent leadership and guidance to the global civil aviation sector to overcome the challenges in the recent years.

Madame President,

3. I would like to begin with the Maldivian Aviation Industry.
4. Due to the geographical dispersion, an air transport network is extremely, essential to our livelihood.
5. It is one of our strategies to establish air connections within 30 minutes of reach by sea from all inhabited islands.
6. This is vital to diversify the benefits of our economic and social progress, beyond tourism and boost our economic activities.
7. Today, we have over 128 Water Aerodromes and 18 Aerodromes of which 5 of them are international. There are ongoing projects to build more airports to fit into the planned air connectivity network.

8. One of the most important ongoing aviation project, is the expansion and re-development of our main gateway, Velana International Airport. When completed, we would be able to accommodate 7 million passengers.
9. Our aviation development is intertwined into the tourism sector. In Maldives, aviation and tourism are co-dependent. In this regard, it is important for us to maintain the pace of aviation development.
10. We have an open sky policy and investors are welcome to start their aviation activities in our tropical archipelago.

Madame President,

11. Without environmental sustainability all these development projects would not bring prosperity to my people. We need to take huge steps in combating climate change.
12. Extreme weather events continue to impact our aviation infrastructure and operations as well. Without environmental sustainability we would not be able to keep our tourism and aviation sector afloat.
13. Carbon off-setting schemes are not a total solution. The real objective should be reducing the emissions.
14. Developing nations do not have to fear losing development opportunities while combating climate change.
15. We don't have to take the same destructive path taken in the past. We can find smarter ways of carrying out development projects.

Madame President,

16. I would like to state the reality of small island states, like the Maldives. We face an uphill battle due to the imbalanced distribution of resources.
17. Just because we are small, we will not be suppressed. We need to ensure that what is written in black and white actually realises into effective implementation.

18. It is extremely important to preserve diplomacy and show the world that 193 member states are united, but the fact of the matter is that, each and every country should get equal chance to raise their voice and be heard.
19. We must respect the sovereignty of each and every state while finding common ground.
20. I call on all member states to reflect on the decisions we take today.
21. Able and well-endowed nations need to lend a helping hand to the nations in need.
22. We need to help each other to establish an orderly air transport network to bring economic prosperity and social harmony to the entire human population without prejudice and inequality.
23. We can only achieve that by focusing on safety, security, and sustainability. We need to support and assist in increasing the level of compliance with ICAO SARPs
24. The Maldives is grateful to ICAO, the European Union, international partners, and our neighbours for their cooperation to raise our level of effective implementation.
25. As I Close, I would like to call on, all nations to work together, help reconnect the world and build a future for aviation that we can be proud of.
26. A future that ensures prosperity for the next generation, our children, and our loved ones.
27. Last but not the least, I would like to congratulate all the states that have been elected to represent the interests of all member states for the next 3 years.
28. Thank you Madam President.