

Opening Address by Han Kok Juan
Director-General, Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore
At the Aviation Safety Forum 2023
Parkroyal Collection Marina Bay Hotel, Singapore
30 August 2023

Distinguished guests,

Friends and colleagues,

Good afternoon.

1. It gives me great pleasure to join all of you at this year's Aviation Safety Forum. This annual forum gathers under one roof chieftains of the Singapore aviation sector, to take stock and chart the way forward. This year, we are meeting at a critical juncture. Air passenger volume is back up, at about 90% of pre-COVID-levels. We expect to achieve full recovery next year, if not earlier.

2. The Singapore aviation sector has done well in the last one year. After Singapore reopened its borders to vaccinated travellers from 1 April 2022, we quickly reconnected with the world and ramped up operations in a smooth and safe fashion. We brought back the distinctive Changi experience we were known for, avoiding massive congestions, chaos and safety incidents.

3. But let us not take this – a safe and smooth recovery – for granted. We should plan, anticipate and expect the aviation system to come under some stress in the last mile of our recovery efforts:

- a. First, resource constraints to meet the demand for air travel will tighten especially during the year-end holiday season. We have stepped up recruitment including through the recent OneAviation Careers Fair which attracted over 10,000 visitors. We will fully reopen Changi Airport Terminal Two in October this year. These will add capacity to the system.

- b. Second, while there is pressure to quickly ramp up, we need to also ease in the manpower and processes to ensure that operations remain safe and smooth. Over 20% of our workforce joined us in the last one and a half years. And we are taking in even more new people. We need to train them properly before we deploy them. Even after having deployed them, we may need to have a system to ease them into their daily routine without compromising safety. Many companies have worked with their unions to put in place structured programmes to do so. For those who have not, I encourage you to do so.

As we work towards full recovery in the coming months, with much hope and confidence, let me urge all aviation companies and workers to continue to keep our eyes on the ball, to ensure safe aviation.

4. Last year, we launched the Singapore Aviation Sector Safety Charter. I am deeply encouraged that almost 100 of you signed the charter to underscore your commitment to safety. This is important. As leaders of our respective organisations, what we do sets the tone and culture.

5. Building on this effort, we launched the Singapore Aviation Sector Safety Culture Survey this year. This is our first-ever longitudinal safety culture survey. The survey helps us understand how safety is perceived, valued and prioritised by our workers and identify areas for improvement. About 4,000 workers from some 400 companies completed the inaugural survey. Thank you for your support. The strong participation in the survey indicates a high level of attention to and ownership of safety matters amongst Singapore aviation companies and workers.

6. We will be sharing the results of the inaugural survey shortly. We did well overall – there is a strong positive aviation safety culture in Singapore – but there are two areas we will work on. First, we will strengthen the trust between management and operational staff by facilitating a clearer understanding of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in different work situations and reinforcing an environment where workers feel safe to proactively report unintentional mistakes without fear of reprisal. Second, we will foster a stronger positive safety culture, particularly in relation to aircraft maintenance which has a more complex work environment, and domains that have seen a significant number of new entrants for example ground handling. CAAS will be conducting focus group discussions with management and workers of key aviation companies to dive deeper and develop initiatives to strengthen safety culture.

7. As you know, Singapore underwent the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme

(USOAP) Audit last year. We had zero audit findings and attained an Effective Implementation score of 99.7 per cent, the highest score achieved by any State to date. The current global average is 68.9 per cent.

8. Our ICAO audit result shows that Singapore has a robust and effective safety regime. But we cannot rest on our laurels. Safety is always work in progress. The inaugural safety culture survey provides a baseline to help us identify areas we can do better, to up the standards and keep ourselves on our toes.

9. When people fly, they put their trust in us - regulators, aircraft manufacturers and airlines - to get them where they need to go, safely. The aviation eco-system comprises a wide array of companies and workers; CAAS exercises safety oversight over 200 organisations, 220 aircraft and 14,000 personnel. We are highly interconnected. Each of us, in our respective individual and organisational capacity, will have to play our part. Let us take Singapore aviation to greater heights, safely together.

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