

**INTERVENTION BY MR S ISWARAN
SINGAPORE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND
MINISTER-IN-CHARGE OF TRADE RELATIONS
AT THE ICAO HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON COVID-19 ON 12 OCTOBER
2021, 9.30PM**

Excellencies

Mr President

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I am pleased to join you at today's ICAO High-Level Conference on COVID-19 Ministerial Plenary session.

Time for Action

2. Over the last 21 months, COVID-19 has exacted a heavy toll on lives, businesses and jobs.
3. Today, we stand at a key inflexion point to revive and resume international air travel. Our goal as government and industry leaders must be to restore the role of aviation in connecting people, places and opportunities.
4. Our paths to this goal will be informed by our circumstances and national priorities. But it is imperative that we collaborate on all fronts - bilateral, regional and multilateral - to rebuild public confidence, and reopen our borders with safe quarantine-free air travel.
5. In Singapore, we have done so through an evidence-based, risk-adjusted approach. With 85% of our population fully vaccinated, we recently launched quarantine-free Vaccinated Travel Lanes or VTLs to 11 countries in North America, Europe and Asia. Our joint VTL with the Republic of Korea is the first between two major aviation hubs in Asia. We aim to do more with all partners, and hope that these VTLs can serve as a pathfinder for more countries and regions to reconnect safely.

Emerging Stronger Together

6. There is now an urgent need for collective action to rebuild a stronger, safer and more resilient global aviation system. In particular:
 - a. States must continue working together to re-establish air links, strengthen our supply chains, and reopen our economies. We must support each other in this endeavour.

- b. Public-private partnership is key to recovery and long-term growth. Government and Industry, we believe, must collaborate on the safe resumption of operations, building capacity and essential capabilities and investing in sustainable solutions for the future.
 - c. Multilaterally, ICAO plays a central role in bringing together States to forge a path to the post-pandemic new normal, and to a long-term sustainable future. ICAO's leadership through initiatives like CART and CORSIA can galvanise all members to restore connectivity and re-invigorate the global economy.
7. In Southeast Asia, we have a saying, "grain by grain, step by step, we build a mountain." In that spirit, let us all resolve to work together to restore international travel and global aviation to its rightful place as a dynamic and vibrant sector. In Singapore, we stand ready to work with ICAO and all fellow members in this critical mission.
8. Thank you.