

Opening Ceremony
Speech of Mr. Abdul Wahab Teffaha – Secretary General
51st Annual General Meeting
Arab Air Carriers' Organization

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great privilege for AACO to come back for the fifth time to the Arab Republic of Egypt, the place where it was incepted, and for its AGM to be held under the patronage of the Egyptian Ministry of Civil Aviation which I would like to thank, personally and on behalf of AACO team, for bestowing its patronage on this AGM. The return to roots always gives momentum to move forward, and sharpens the will for continuous progress, how about then if those roots were in Egypt, one of the world's oldest and most enlightened civilizations, where its observers were, and still are, overwhelmed with admiration, and even awe, for the capacity of the people of this land for unlimited creativity.

As for AACO, the return to the place where it was established more than five decades ago, and where EgyptAir was launched in 1932 as the first Arab airline ever, does not only represent the return to its birthplace, but also a milestone to reflect on where we were as an Arab air transport sector, where we are now, and where we aspire to be in the future. The number of airlines which established AACO at the time was thirteen. Those airlines operated 86 aircraft, offering 5,018 seats in total. They were, with the exception of a very few, owned by some of the world's more established airlines, and operated in principle to connect the capitals of our countries, and to connect our capitals with those of the world.

At that time, Arab airlines transported 2.2 million passengers using the fleet aforementioned, whereby that number represented 2% of the Arab world's population. As for now, Arab airlines transported last year 224 million passengers around the globe, including around 194 million passengers on routes to, from, and within the Arab world, using a fleet of 1,363 aircraft. Moreover, and not long time ago, the question most frequently asked to Arab airlines' leaders was "When will Arab airlines reach the ranks of foreign and global airlines?"

We have become today a model to be followed by global airlines: The modernity of fleet, which is the youngest in the world, the distinctive level of service, the various prices which suit various market segments, the expanse of the network, the level of safety and security,

in addition to the modernity of infrastructure and its continued development, and the utilization of the geographical location, made Arab airlines an essential added value to the global consumer, and a lever for economic development. The contribution of the Arab air transport sector in the Arab GDP is more than double its global average, and its distinctive role has become an integral part of job creation and the development of the various economic sectors.

This is what we have become today. As for what we aspire for in the future, it is a world of few restrictions on market access, capacity offering, and ownership, irrespective of investors' nationalities, and most importantly is the freedom of the consumer, traveler or shipper, to choose what best suits him in a transparent and healthy competitive environment. Such a future can only exist with the existence of policies that include clear economic rules and proper consideration to the importance of developing the infrastructure and that of the added value of long term economic development.

**Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In spite of the instability we are witnessing in some parts of our region, the human, cultural, and civilizational wealth enjoyed by our region and its people can only result in an air transport sector that represents a continuous driving force for good, connectivity, and contribution to sustainable economic development.

**Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like in conclusion to reiterate my thanks and gratitude to the Ministry of Civil Aviation for bestowing its patronage on this AGM, along with my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Chairman of this AGM, Capt. Ahmed Adel, and his team. I would like also to invite you to indulge in the authentic Arabian hospitality we enjoy whenever we come to this good land.