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THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Mr. President of the ICAO Council

Mr. President of ECAC

Ms. Executive Secretary of ECAC

Director Generals of Civil Aviation and distinguished participants.

It is an honor to attend the 42<sup>nd</sup> Plenary Session of the European Civil Aviation Conference in the beautiful city of Strasbourg today. I'm deeply grateful to ECAC for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Republic of Korea, a long-standing and valued companion of Europe.

Korea-Europe relations evolved into a strategic partnership in 2010, one of ten worldwide. This partnership forms the foundation for cooperation across multiple sectors in political, economic, and cultural domains, with aviation at its core. Europe is now Korea's third-largest trading partner, with civil aviation connecting continents, cultures, and innovations. Korea-EU airways have deepened bilateral ties and serve as a vital gateway between Asia and Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen!

We're witnessing robust growth in aviation as we emerge from the pandemic. In the near future, we anticipate an unprecedented technological and digital revolution that could fundamentally alter our socio-economic landscape and aviation systems. Further, civil aviation faces major transformations in industrial structures, regulations, and technology, all unfolding amidst global uncertainties.

It is in this dynamic environment that international cooperation becomes crucial. And, our collective response to these changes and challenges is essential. By working together, we can more effectively navigate uncertainties and create new opportunities for growth and innovation. Having benefited from international support, including ICAO, Korea is committed to actively participating in international cooperation and collaboration. In particular, I would like to emphasize Korea's commitment to working closely with Europe, as a key player in global aviation, to promote mutual growth and advance the future of aviation.

Let me briefly outline four priority areas of cooperation.

*Firstly, aviation safety is our foremost priority*, synonymous with trust and sustainable growth. As global challenges test the aviation safety system's resilience, Korea, the ninth-largest country in global air transportation, remains committed to safety. We're investing a lot in smart, ICT-based, and data-driven safety management for complex aviation ecosystems, while focusing on improving safety culture. We aim to strengthen cooperation in this field.

Furthermore, Korea has partnered with EASA since 2019 to develop safety regulatory capabilities. We've collaborated on safety frameworks for UAM, SBAS, aircraft certification, and diverse EU Aviation Partnership Projects, and hope to expand these efforts. Besides, the plan to establish Airbus's International Technology Centre in Korea with a MOU signed in last May, marks a significant milestone in our cooperation.

*Secondly, sustainability should be our common horizon*. Inspired by Europe's 'ReFuelEU Aviation', Korea is accelerating SAF production and deployment. Korea established the Bio-fuel Alliance in 2022, uniting private, public, academic, and research sectors to promote SAF production and utilization.

The Korean government also underscores its proactive approach following the adoption of the 'ICAO Global Framework for SAF, LCAF and other aviation cleaner energies' last year. We are swiftly implementing policies to cultivate a robust SAF supply ecosystem and incentivize its utilization. In January, we enacted CORSIA management and SAF production regulations. And, two major oil refiners started to produce SAF early this year, with plans to supply SAF at Incheon International Airport starting in the second half, aiming for mandatory usage from 2027. Korea's policies align with ICAO and ECAC's goals in decarbonizing international civil aviation. We need to continue closer cooperation in this field.

*Thirdly, we focus on adapting innovative technologies*. Advanced air mobility and AI are imminent realities. Korea's Grand Challenge for Urban Air Mobility involves about 200 entities from various sectors, and we're prioritizing it as a key national initiative.

Plus, we eager to expand cooperation with European countries to secure technologies for integrating Unmanned Aircraft operations into existing airspace and AI-based airport management and digitalization.

*Finally, we emphasize education and training for capacity building.*

We established the Korea Aviation Academy (KAA) last June and plan to expand cooperation with overseas agencies to enhance government safety oversight capabilities. We also seek to explore more areas for cooperation with ECAC, especially in supporting capacity building for developing countries.

Distinguished participants, colleagues, and friends!

Many people are saying we are living in a time of rapid change and high uncertainty. Nevertheless, I believe civil aviation is the most critical mode of transportation that can propel global economic growth and connectivity. It is still one of the most promising industries of all.

What is most important is promoting sustainable growth in global civil aviation. The Korean government will join forces with ECAC and its member States to respond and overcome recent challenges, and elevate the global civil aviation system to a more advanced level. We are dedicated to pursuing the shared prosperity of global aviation in strong partnership with all of you.

In closing, I extend my heartfelt congratulations on the successful hosting of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Plenary Session of ECAC. I also send my best wishes for the upcoming Paris Olympics, a truly global celebration for all humanity. Thank you so much.