It is my pleasure to congratulate the aviation fraternity on the auspicious occasion of International Civil Aviation Day being celebrated under the theme Advancing Innovation for Global Aviation Development; to mark the signing of the Convention on International Civil Aviation on 7 December 1944 in Chicago. I would also like to congratulate the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) on their 77th anniversary of its establishment through this historical Convention. Since its establishment, ICAO has continuously been working for the safe, secure, efficient, and environmentally sustainable growth of global aviation.

The application of modern innovation and technology in the aviation industry plays a key role in helping to improve the level and quality of aviation safety. Safety can affect the public's trust and confidence in the air transport system. Therefore, Government's objective is to ensure that aviation remains a safe mode of transport.

Over the years, Government has invested significantly in modernizing the air transport system. Various efforts have been implemented by the Government through the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) to ensure the highest safety and security levels of aviation. These include, establishment and implementation of State Safety Programme/Safety Management System (SSP/SMS); upgrade of the Communications Navigations Surveillance/Air Traffic Management System to improve the performance level of the Air Navigation System; and enhance monitoring capabilities using the Automatic Dependent Surveillance Broadcast (ADS-B) technology at strategic locations throughout the country.

The impact of COVID-19 not only significantly affected domestic and international passenger traffic and air freight, but also the socio-economic activities that are generated from these events. Among the sectors that directly experience this effect is the tourism and hospitality sectors, as well as other related industries.

Air transport is a catalyst for socio-economic development and an enabler of a country's economic growth. Notwithstanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the aviation industry, the upward growth of passengers and cargo movement to Guyana is an encouraging sign for the economy and the Government.

Guyana's aviation sector continues to attract investors and the expectation is that modern facilities and services would be available to match their products. Hence, to make these facilities available, Government has continued its developmental agenda by expanding and modernizing aviation infrastructure such as the Cheddi Jagan International Airport terminal buildings, its runway and the newly commissioned Instrument Landing System (ILS) to cater for increased flights, larger aircraft, improved safety for departures, and landings. These initiatives are opening opportunities for Guyana to become a regional hub for air transport. We are pleased that the Eugene F. Correia International Airport is one of the busiest aerodromes within the Caribbean and South American Region with more than 130 daily departures and landings.

Guyana's level of Effective Implementation of ICAO's Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs). Currently the country stands at 75% with the aspiration of moving to the 90 percentile.

Guyana was also recently recognised by the ICAO for having the highest index for Safety Oversight Capabilities among thirty-five (35) States in the South America, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean Regions, and the second highest index in the South American Region for its Air Navigation Services Safety Oversight Capabilities.

Efforts to foster progress in aviation are also demonstrated through our endorsement of several bilateral and multilateral air services agreements with countries in North America, Europe, Asia, Middle East and Africa which will serve as the platform for expansion of international travel, fostering tourism expansion, creation of new routes and destinations, and partnership and cooperation with other Governments and stakeholders.

Guyana embraced this year's theme and will continue to forge ahead with developmental policies which will ensure the long-term sustainability of the aviation industry in Guyana.

Guyana stands ready with its fellow 192 member States and ICAO to work towards Global Aviation Development.

A very happy International Civil Aviation Day and may God continue to bless us all.