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ICAO AND AFGHANISTAN SIGN AGREEMENT FOR REBUILDING OF KABUL AIRPORT

MONTREAL, 30 May 2002 – The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and Afghanistan today signed a Project Document and Management Services Agreement (MSA) for the rebuilding by ICAO of Kabul airport and the provision of air traffic control services.

The US\$8.2 million project funded by Afghanistan is part of a larger initiative by ICAO for the rehabilitation of that country's civil aviation system, with its expeditious return to civilian authorities, at an overall estimated cost of US\$37 million.

Additional funding for the rebuilding of other airports, full re-opening of the country's airspace and re-establishment of the civil aviation administration is expected from States that attended the International Conference on Reconstruction of Afghanistan held in Tokyo in January 2002.

Under the Project Document and MSA, ICAO will provide overall execution of the Kabul airport project, including the hiring and training of airport and air traffic control personnel, as well as the purchase of airport and air traffic control equipment and facilities.

The MSA also stipulates that ICAO will continue to provide technical cooperation and assistance to Afghanistan for the duration of the rehabilitation of the country's civil aviation system and for all projects covered by the agreement.

Signing on behalf of ICAO, Council President Dr. Assad Kotaite emphasized the urgency of restoring the civil aviation system of Afghanistan to international levels, in accordance with the Standards and Recommended Practices of ICAO and the provisions of the region's air navigation plan.

"A fully operational civil aviation system is crucial to the reconstruction of Afghanistan and to its future economic development. ICAO is committed to working with local authorities and the international community in restoring the integrity of Afghanistan civil aviation as quickly as possible," he emphasized.

The Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism of the Interim Administration of Afghanistan, Dr. Zalmay Rassoul stated, "The rebuilding of our civil aviation system is the cornerstone of Afghanistan's social and economic development, as well as a powerful symbol of the global reconstruction efforts underway in our country. My colleagues and I in the Interim Administration are grateful to ICAO for its efficient and speedy cooperation in meeting the immense challenges that lie ahead in restoring normalcy to Afghanistan."

Afghanistan airspace is of strategic importance for air traffic between South-East Asia and Europe. When it was closed from 16 September 2001 to 15 February 2002, flights were rerouted around Afghanistan, resulting in longer flight times, considerable additional costs to airlines and inconvenience to passengers.

There are currently three air routes available to commercial traffic over Afghanistan. Civilian flights in and out of the country are operated at Kabul airport by the United Nations and Ariana, the Afghanistan national carrier.

ICAO was created in 1944 to promote the safe and orderly development of civil aviation in the world. A specialized agency of the United Nations, it sets international standards and regulations necessary for the safety, security, efficiency and regularity of air transport and serves as the medium for cooperation in all fields of civil aviation among its 187 Contracting States.