



**Keynote address by the President of the Council of
the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González,
at the World Civil Aviation Chief Executives Forum
of the Singapore Aviation Academy (SAA)**

(Singapore, 11 December 2006)

It is truly a pleasure for me to take part in the World Civil Aviation Chief Executives Forum. I wish to take this opportunity to express to Singapore the sincere gratitude of ICAO for the very good support and involvement in our regional activities. In particular, I acknowledge with thanks the leadership and chairmanship of the Asia/Pacific Air Navigation Planning and Implementation Regional Group (APANPIRG).

The theme of your Forum this year – “Gearing for Growth: Opportunities and Challenges” – reflects quite accurately the state of the global air transport system in 2006. Growth is inherent to air transport. In 60 years, the number of passengers on scheduled traffic has grown steadily from about eight million in 1945 to some two billion on scheduled services alone in 2005. As a matter of fact, there have been only three years without growth: in 1991, because of the first Gulf War, and in 2001 and 2002, due to the events of 11 September 2001.

According to ICAO’s latest medium-term forecast, global passenger traffic in terms of passenger-kilometres performed will increase by 6.1 per cent this year, 5.8 per cent in 2007 and 5.6 per cent in 2008. For the longer term, up to 2015, the average annual growth rate should be 4.4 per cent. In terms of the number of passengers, this is equivalent to about 2.8 billion by 2015. The International Air Transport Association and the Airports Council International have issued similar forecasts.

More recently, the World Tourism Organization stated that in the first eight months of 2006, international tourist arrivals increased by 4.5 per cent over the same period in 2005, itself a record year, and growth is expected to continue in 2007 at a pace of around 4 per cent worldwide and at 4.1 per cent through to 2020. Asia and the Pacific was the world’s second fastest-growing region with 8.3 per cent, behind Africa at 10.6 per cent. This Region’s overall performance is remarkable, especially considering that the tourism sector has continued to suffer this year from a succession of natural disasters, health scares, and political unrest.

The opportunities flowing from this upward trend in passenger traffic can be enormous in terms of the economic contribution of civil aviation. In the global economy, every 100 dollars of output produced and every 100 jobs generated by air transport trigger additional demands of some \$325 and 610 jobs in other industries. To make sure this materializes, however, we will have to address successfully the potential impediments to sustained growth in air transport.

Our first priority must continue to be the safety of the global air transport system. The enhancement of aviation safety is enshrined in the aims and objectives of ICAO and is the first of six strategic objectives contained in our Business Plan. It calls upon the Organization to enhance global civil aviation safety through specific measures based on prevention, cooperation and the consistent implementation of ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices, or SARPs.

I am convinced that many accidents could have been avoided if ICAO SARPs had been implemented uniformly and consistently. Since 1999, our Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme, USOAP, has clearly improved global safety, although serious safety oversight weaknesses remain in a number of States. The expansion of USOAP in 2005 under a comprehensive systems approach is expected to highlight other areas of concern that must be dealt with on a priority basis. There is an urgent need to act on the identified shortfalls in a coordinated and assertive manner.

A milestone decision of the Conference of Directors General of Civil Aviation (DGCAs) held at ICAO in March of this year will help this process along. The DGCAs unanimously agreed that ICAO should post the results of safety oversight audits under USOAP on the ICAO public website as soon as possible and no later than March 2008. At present, some 82 States have authorized ICAO to publish the information on the first cycle of audits conducted between 1999 and 2004.

I believe such transparency and sharing of information will encourage States to correct more quickly the safety deficiencies that remain in their aviation systems and make it easier for States and donors to provide more rapid and more effective assistance to those that require much-needed financial or human resources.

The concept of transparency and sharing of information is also at the heart of our *Unified strategy to resolve safety-related deficiencies*. It emphasizes the free-flow of safety-related information by everyone involved in air transport, at every level, and across every discipline. This is an essential condition for creating or strengthening partnerships to resolve deficiencies, essentially in the form of regional or sub-regional safety oversight organizations.

The other vital element of our global safety strategy is the implementation of Safety Management Systems (SMS). It is the most effective way of responding to the need for results-based supervision with a relatively small workforce. Many ICAO Member States are implementing or exploring safety management systems to complement their existing regulatory structure. We encourage them with concrete assistance in the form of standards and related guidance material, and a model legislation to make it easier to implement SMS. We want to promote an effective synergy between USOAP, our Unified Strategy, and the growing application of SMS worldwide.

While on the subject of safety, I am pleased to mention that ICAO took delivery just last week of the second and final part of a Global Aviation Safety Roadmap developed by members of the air transport industry, in consultation with ICAO safety specialists. This is a great moment in aviation safety. It marks the first time that governments and industry have jointly developed a unified and coordinated approach to reducing accident rates, particularly in developing regions of the world, in accordance with ICAO's Global Aviation Safety Plan. The Roadmap will provide a common frame of reference for all stakeholders to coordinate and guide safety policies and initiatives. I invite you to consult the ICAO website for the full text of the Global Aviation Safety Roadmap.

The flip side of safety is security. The alleged terrorist plots in the United Kingdom, last August, potentially involving liquids used as explosives, emphasized the vulnerability of the global air transport system. It also led to the imposition, by many countries, of harsh security restrictions that resulted in a level of personal inconvenience surpassed only by the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001 in the United States. Just a few days ago, ICAO issued a State letter in which it recommended security control guidelines for screening liquids, gels and aerosols for implementation not later than 1 March 2007.

In managing security issues, governments have the difficult and unenviable task of balancing the need for maintaining and encouraging anti-terrorist vigilance while, at the same time, putting in place workable security measures that do not compromise the commercial efficiency of the air transport sector. The delicate nature of this exercise is compounded by the fact that considerable economic damage can occur even when terrorist plans are foiled.

ICAO's Plan of Action for Strengthening Aviation Security adopted by the High-level Ministerial Conference of 2002 addresses many of these concerns. This Plan includes a Universal Security Audit Programme (USAP) and is complemented by a series of programmes and activities designed to help States comply with SARPs contained in Annex 17 to the *Convention on International Civil Aviation*. The adoption of ICAO-standard Machine Readable Travel Documents, including ePassports, is an effective way of increasing the security of air travel. In the long term, we must diligently assess new and emerging threats, such as bacteriological and chemical weapons, man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS) and the misuse of civil aircraft themselves as weapons of destruction. Our objective is to continually monitor and upgrade existing security processes to ensure that they are commensurate with the level of threat identified, while expediting the clearance of passengers and cargo at airports.

The impact of aircraft gas emissions is another very serious challenge, one that could generate enough public pressure to halt the growth of air transport. The problem is that while aircraft today are 70 per cent more energy efficient than they were in the 1970s, the sustained growth in the number of flights means that aviation will be polluting more. Part of the solution is to pursue our work diligently through the ICAO Council's Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP), in close cooperation with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other interested parties, to limit or reduce the impact of aviation greenhouse gas emissions.

Another avenue to CO₂ savings is the implementation of improved communications, navigation, surveillance and air traffic management (CNS/ATM) systems. The concept is simple. If aircraft are allowed to fly the most fuel-efficient routes, we help the environment and we save time and money in the process. Every minute saved in flight, saves 160 kg of CO₂ emissions. Over the past few years, achieving shorter routes has led to the reduction of millions of tonnes of CO₂ emissions. For example, in 2005, governments worked with IATA to shorten 300 routes worldwide. The implementation in 2003 of the EMARSSH routes, in which ICAO played a leading role, shortened routes between Southeast Asia and Europe by 30 minutes. And routes between the Philippines and Japan have been shortened by 36 nautical miles.

These results are impressive, yet the potential is even greater. Airspace management improvements in the Pearl River Delta could save 1 million tonnes of CO₂ a year. Better regional coordination on the approach routes into Hong Kong could shave 20 minutes and 3 tonnes of CO₂ off each flight. For the upcoming 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, routes over Russia into Weixian, China could also be reduced by 20 minutes. In Europe, the story is much the same. A fully optimized European ATM network could result in annual CO₂ savings of about 12 million tonnes, equivalent to removing 3 million cars from European roads.

The bottom line with all these statistics is that implementation of ATM improvements could make a substantial contribution towards reducing fuel burn, with corresponding reductions in CO₂ emissions and fuel costs for airlines. The reality is that fragmented ATM systems, constrained airspace design, and a lack of ATC systems interoperability still pose considerable obstacles for achieving further benefits. As a result, airspace users cannot realize the full potential of their equipment. Congestion in and around airports not only translates into excess fuel burn, but also added costs for operators and inconveniences to passengers.

The answer lies of course in a global air traffic management system based on interoperability and seamlessness across regions for all users during all phases of flight, one that meets agreed levels of safety, provides for optimum economic operations, is environmentally sustainable, and reflects national security requirements. That is the vision of ICAO and to that end, ICAO sent to its 189 Member States last February a proposal to amend the Global Air Navigation Plan for CNS/ATM systems. The proposed Global Plan is based on recommendations of the Eleventh Air Navigation Conference of 2003 and two related industry roadmaps developed subsequent to the Conference. I am pleased to inform you that the Council has just approved the new Global Air Navigation Plan. ICAO has already integrated this work into its new Business Plan, which stresses the

implementation of harmonized air traffic management systems and performance-based efficiency improvements, as well as increased functional integration between ICAO Headquarters and its Regional Offices.

One consequence of the growth in traffic and aircraft movements that I am particularly concerned about is an anticipated shortage of qualified and experienced pilots and air traffic controllers. This is already a problem in many parts of the world, particularly in high growth areas. In addition, there are the new language proficiency requirements which will become effective in March of 2008 and which will require efforts to ensure proper training and certification of pilots and air traffic controllers. In this connection, I would like to thank the Government of Singapore for extending and expanding the ICAO-Singapore Developing Country Training Programme for a further three years to train 150 participants.

The last challenge I would like to raise this morning is one we all have been sensitized to and that is the potential threat posed by an avian influenza. ICAO has done considerable work in coordinating an international effort to bring together expertise from such organizations as the World Health Organization, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, IATA and ACI in order to develop Guidelines for States that will assist in their preparedness planning. These guidelines are now available. They are generic, in that they are applicable to many communicable diseases that might cause a public health emergency. This guidance material is largely based on experience gained during the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003. Here again, I would like to thank Singapore for its exemplary support in the preparation of the contingency plan for the SARS outbreak and its on going implication in the avian influenza preparedness programme.

Ladies and gentlemen, over the next three days, distinguished speakers representing various regions and fields of expertise will share their thoughts on the opportunities and mostly challenges that I have raised in my presentation. In their comments, I am sure that there will be one constant, and that is the need for global cooperation in addressing global challenges. It is only by working together that we can find and implement effectively the solutions to the challenges that stand between us and realized opportunities.

I thank you for your attention and, like you, look forward to a most interesting forum.