



**Opening address by the President of the Council
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González**

to the

**ICAO Forum on Integration and Harmonization of NextGen and SESAR into the
Global ATM Framework**

(Montreal, 8 September 2008)

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Forum on Integration and Harmonization of NextGen and SESAR into the Global ATM Framework.

This meeting is an important step in the ongoing discussions within the aviation community to develop and implement the vision of an interoperable and seamless global Air Traffic Management (ATM) system – a system that applies to all users, during all phases of flight, and that meets agreed levels of safety, provides for optimum economic operations, is environmentally sustainable and meets national security requirements.

During the next two and a half days, we will explore two of the systems currently under development – SESAR and NextGen. We need to better understand what they are, how they will affect us – whether ICAO, States, air navigation services providers, operators, manufacturers and related stakeholders, learn what other States are considering as future ANS systems and, finally, begin the process of identifying how we can facilitate implementation.

What I consider critical about NextGen and SESAR is that they both recognize the importance of evolving through ICAO's Operational Concept, Global Air Navigation Plan and framework for performance-based transition, as embraced by the Eleventh Air Navigation Conference in 2003.

This reflects the long-standing ICAO policy of close cooperation and commitment among all members of the ATM community towards achieving shared goals. Collaborative decision making at all levels, and based on a global vision and a wider planning perspective for the implementation of facilities and services over larger geographical areas, is essential to continued improvements.

Another compelling reason for adopting the collaborative approach is the symbiotic relationship between aviation and the world economy. Air transport is a formidable driver of economic development. We all benefit from it, be it for trips to business meetings such as this one, the rapid distribution of goods to worldwide markets, visits with family and friends, global travel and tourism, and the manufacturing, operation and maintenance of the aviation system, all of which support local economies and job creation. As the world economy grows, however, so does air traffic and airspace congestion, increasing pressure on infrastructure and facilities already stretched to the limit in many parts of the world. Inevitably, delays increase, while access, predictability and the environment suffer. It is our collective responsibility, working in unison, to ensure that the aviation system has the means and the capabilities to meet increasing demands in an interoperable, harmonized, efficient and environmentally friendly manner.

In the last few years, ICAO has focused increasingly on performance. Eighteen months ago, we hosted the Worldwide Symposium on Performance of the Air Navigation System. That event focused attention on the new performance-based approach to civil air navigation; investigating how stakeholders of the world aviation community, working under the auspices of ICAO, would jointly realize the vision of an integrated and globally harmonized ATM system, with a planning horizon up to and beyond the year 2025. We are now ready to hear details of specific plans for implementing two of the systems expected to meet these objectives.

The United States and Europe have undertaken tremendous initiatives, NextGen and SESAR. We are fortunate to have with us at this Forum key representatives from both programmes to brief us on the status of their respective activities, in terms of technology and procedures. We also have experts from several other States who will inform us of their own plans for dealing with future ATM challenges and opportunities. A discussion on the development and coordination of Standards will review the context in which the work programmes for ICAO Panels and the Secretariat will unfold. IATA and CANSO will explain what this all means to the airlines and ANS providers. We will hear perspectives from airports, pilots, controllers and engineers through their respective representatives. All of this will help us validate and refine our common vision for an integrated and globally harmonized ATM system and the work being done to achieve it.

We can certainly be proud of the advances we have made. Let me emphasize that continued progress depends on cooperation among all members of the civil aviation community and involves the enthusiastic sharing of information and ideas. You will notice that we have several members of the ICAO Council acting as moderators. The Council will have an integral role in seeing the future requirements of States can be achieved in a straightforward, expeditious manner. As always, ICAO is committed to meeting expectations of all stakeholders in this endeavor. Together, we have a formidable task ahead of us: to ensure the viability of the air navigation system of the future and its continued contribution to global economic development in a safe, secure, efficient and environmentally sustainable manner.

This last point is the one on which I wish to conclude. Improvements in the effectiveness and efficiency of the air traffic management system will have a corresponding effect in reducing aircraft engine emissions and noise. Your contribution to the greening of aviation can be highly significant. I ask you to keep this dimension of your work in mind and coordinate your efforts with colleagues who are focused on other aspects of aviation and environmental protection. We all have a role to play in the long-term sustainability of aviation.

And so, thank you for joining us here in Montréal. We sincerely appreciate your participation and we want to assure you that the outcome of this Forum will be taken into account in the further development of the global ATM framework.