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**“FLIGHT BETWEEN NATIONS - DIALOGUE BETWEEN PEOPLES
THE THEME FOR THE 2001 EDITION OF
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION DAY**

Montreal, 5 December 2001 – “Flight Between Nations – Dialogue Between Peoples” is the theme of the 2001 edition of the International Civil Aviation Day, celebrated annually to mark the creation of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) on 7 December 1944.

“Dialogue is the basis for understanding and friendship among individuals and peoples of the world. When combined with face to face exchanges, its full potential is realized” commented Dr. Assad Kotaite, President of the Council of ICAO, in his annual message.

“In our modern, fast-paced world, civil aviation is the only mode of mass transportation that permits such personal communications amongst all of us, wherever we may be around the world,” he added.

Dr. Kotaite highlighted the challenge of the world aviation community to restore public confidence in air travel following the 11 September tragic events in the United States.

“ The 21st century holds great promise, as long as we can protect what seems to me as the inherent right and need of human beings to be with those whom they love and cherish, and to make new friends and acquaintances among the inhabitants of our shrinking planet,” he said.

The Secretary General of ICAO, Mr. Renato Cláudio Costa Pereira, stressed that prevention remains the best long-term strategy for dealing with the new threat posed by suicidal terrorist attacks.

“Ultimately, we should consider a new global security culture, which adapts to and builds on the best practices of the past and which includes: the judicious use of new technologies like biometrics and machine readable travel documents (MRTDs); seamless communication channels between the air transport industry, immigration, and law enforcement authorities; better hiring and training methods for security personnel at

airports; flexible and fool-proof operating standards that keep pace with the tactics of terrorists; a mindset that takes nothing for granted and that places the protection of human life above all other considerations”, he explained.

Mr. Costa Pereira called on all parties to exercise strong political will and commit the required financial and human resources to building a system “which makes it impossible for a terrorist to board an aircraft and, should they still slip through the net, that can neutralize them immediately.”

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.

**Message from the President of the Council of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Dr. Assad Kotaite,
for the worldwide celebration of
International Civil Aviation Day on 7 December 2001**

Dialogue is the basis for understanding and friendship among individuals and peoples of the world. When combined with face to face exchanges, its full potential is realized.

In our modern, fast-paced world, civil aviation is the only mode of mass transportation that permits such personal communications amongst all of us, wherever we may be around the world. One need only imagine a life without air travel to grasp how critical it has become to the evolution of individuals and to the evolution of our global society.

Over the past half century, we have developed a global air transport system that is remarkably safe by any measure. In the year 2000, there were some 22 million flights worldwide on scheduled carriers and only 18 fatal accidents. Out of more than 1.6 billion passengers, 755 persons lost their lives. Every loss of life is deeply regrettable, yet aviation safety is as close to perfect as it has ever been.

The tragic events of 11 September in the United States plunged us into an unfamiliar and troubling reality. They have shaken consumer confidence in a system that nevertheless remains strong and resilient.

We must and we will restore confidence in air travel, in part because global air transport is a driver of economic development, a catalyst for business and tourism, and a vehicle for social and cultural development worldwide, yet primarily because of its ability to bring people together.

We must and we will remain vigilant and steadfast in our determination to provide citizens of the world with the safest and most efficient civil aviation system possible, while protecting the system against new and unexpected forms of man-induced threats.

The 21st century holds great promise, as long as we can protect what seems to me as the inherent right and need of human beings to be with those whom they love and cherish, and to make new friends and acquaintances among the inhabitants of our shrinking planet.

For almost half a century now, I have seen the world aviation community meet successfully every challenge that has come its way. I am convinced we will do so again. And the power of aviation to bring people together in constructive dialogue will prove once again to be its greatest asset.

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**Message from the Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Renato Cláudio Costa Pereira,
for the worldwide celebration of
International Civil Aviation Day on 7 December 2001**

Suicidal terrorist attacks, in which aircraft are used as flying bombs aimed at civilian targets, have emerged as the largest threat ever to the security of our friendly skies.

We have begun the process of understanding, internalising and acting on this new, awesome reality. Within hours of the 11 September attacks, Member States of ICAO implemented exceptional security procedures. A few weeks later, at the 33rd Session of their Assembly, they agreed on long-term steps, including an international, high-level, ministerial conference to develop measures for “preventing, combatting and eradicating acts of terrorism involving civil aviation”. The future-oriented conference will be held 19 and 20 February 2002.

Prevention must remain our first priority. Ultimately, we should consider a new global security culture, which adapts to and builds on the best practices of the past and which includes: the judicious use of new technologies like biometrics and machine readable travel documents (MRTDs); seamless communication channels between the air transport industry, immigration, and law enforcement authorities; better hiring and training methods for security personnel at airports; flexible and fool-proof operating standards that keep pace with the tactics of terrorists; a mindset that takes nothing for granted and that places the protection of human life above all other considerations.

This can best be achieved by tapping the brains of specialists from every field of human endeavour, inside as well as outside the aviation world. We must challenge them to develop a system which makes it impossible for a terrorist to board an aircraft and, should they still slip through the net, that can neutralize them immediately. In so doing, we must strike a balance between concern for increased security and the desire of passengers for speedy and hassle-free travel.

Finally, we must exercise strong political will and commit to such a system with all of the required financial and human resources. Whatever the cost, it certainly will be an extremely small fraction of the financial implications of lethal terrorist attacks.

“Flight between nations – Dialogue between peoples” captures the essence of international civil aviation. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that it thrives in the decades to come, for the benefit of all inhabitants of our planet.

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