Opening address by the
President of the ICAO Council,
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to the 70th Annual IFALPA Conference

(Madrid, Spain, 10 April 2015)

Good morning everyone.

I truly appreciate this opportunity to address this 70th Annual IFALPA Conference, and in particular to speak to the results of the ICAO High-level Safety Conference, or HLSC, last February. Let’s deal with the higher-profile items first today.

The downing in 2014 of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17, and the disappearance of Malaysian Airlines flight MH370, raised important concerns for aviation. This is why we convened a sectoral response and brought related proposals to the attention of the HLSC so rapidly.

With respect to MH17 and conflict zones, the Conference’s main recommendation was for ICAO to develop and host a centralized online portal where States, operators and applicable organizations could share up-to-date conflict zone risk information. By permitting access to multiple sources of risk information where available, the goal of the portal would be to help all players develop more comprehensive and effective risk assessments.

The ICAO Council subsequently endorsed this recommendation and access for registered users to the conflict zone portal is now available on the homepage of the ICAO public website.

Another major outcome of the Safety Conference was support for a new 15-minute flight-tracking standard. I presently expect this to be adopted by Council as early as this November, following consultations with States and international organizations.

The new 15-minute standard represents an important foundation for global flight tracking. It will also serve as a critical first step in the implementation of ICAO’s more comprehensive Global Aeronautical Distress and Safety System, or GADSS.

The full concept of operations for the GADSS calls for a three-tiered approach for tracking normal, abnormal and distress conditions over the long-term, as well as outlining procedures and responsibilities for all stakeholders.

ICAO is presently leading a global aircraft tracking implementation initiative in order to demonstrate the best use of existing equipment and capabilities. The exercise includes the testing of procedures for operator flight monitoring, air traffic services, search and rescue, and civil/military cooperation. We presently expect a dozen or more world airlines to participate, and a range of aircraft types.
The results of this exercise will be forwarded to our Air Navigation Commission, and subsequently to the ICAO Council, so as to better inform what it ultimately adopts in November.

Real progress on tracking will require not only that we determine practical and cost-effective Standards and solutions, but also that Member States and operators have the tools and proficiencies they need to effectively implement what ICAO asks of them.

I absolutely recognize this need, and not only for flight tracking, but indeed across our entire range of ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs). Accordingly I have made it a major priority for ICAO to consider and provide the fullest implementation support, capacity-building, and related coordination assistance possible to States and operators.

Our goal in this regard is to ensure that No Country is Left Behind where effective ICAO SARP implementation and the significant social and economic benefits of air transport are concerned.

Besides these developments on conflict zones and flight tracking, the HLSC also delivered important recommendations on additional strategic priorities for aviation. Two which may be of interest to IFALPA in particular concern the safe integration of remotely piloted aircraft systems into civilian airspace, as well as the implementation of Performance-based Navigation (PBN) regulatory oversight.

Another topic I wish to briefly address today relates to the very unfortunate loss of Germanwings Flight 9525. ICAO, as you know, may only act on the official findings and recommendations issued in State accident reports, consistent with the Annex 13 framework which is in place.

Nevertheless, we have all heard the reports and seen the conclusions which are being drawn, and if these are eventually supported by the facts then reviews will likely be necessary of our current guidance on flight compartment access and crew procedures when a pilot or co-pilot exits the cockpit. ICAO has been seeking to draw greater attention to the importance of mental health assessments and follow-ups for licensed aviation personnel since 2009, and we will continue to do so, but we also recognize that this is a complex medical challenge. I would also add here that ICAO very much appreciates that an aviation system relies first and foremost on the aviators who make it function, and that our appreciation and deep respect for the global pilot community will never be diminished by the actions of a single individual.

Ultimately, aviation safety and the effective implementation of ICAO SARPs will continue to rely on the ability of our sector to realize cooperative, collaborative and coordinated efforts among all its members.

This has certainly been a hallmark of the highly successful relationship which ICAO and IFALPA have established over the past 70 years, and I would highlight here your association’s active participation as an observer on the ICAO Air Navigation Commission and many of its Panels. This is in addition to your valued participation on the important ICAO Panels for Aviation Security (AVSECP), Facilitation (FALP) and Air Transport Regulation (ATRP), as well as your supportive contributions over the years to many ICAO forums and Regional Groups.
IFALPA brings a unique operational perspective to ICAO by providing expertise from the end user’s point of view. This greatly enhances the development and amendment of ICAO SARPs and guidance material, one good current example being our Dangerous Goods Panel review later this month of IFALPA’s joint Working Paper with the ICCAIA on lithium-metal batteries.

ICAO looks forward to IFALPA’s continuous commitment and collaboration in the years ahead.

Thank you, and I wish you very fruitful deliberations.