It is an honour and a privilege for me to join you today in celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Latin American Civil Aviation Commission.

Yours is a proud history. Over the past 40 years, LACAC has grown into a stable and influential force for change and progress in air transport throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Commission has spared no effort in responding to the rapidly evolving and expanding needs of travelers and businesses for safe, regular, efficient and economical air transport.

You have played a vital role in coordinating and establishing policies and common approaches on a wide range of subjects pertaining to the development of civil aviation among Member States and with industry.

On behalf of the Council of ICAO, the Secretary General and our Regional Office personnel, I commend and thank the men and women of LACAC, past and present, for their dedication and their enthusiasm in cooperating with ICAO and other aviation stakeholders in serving the peoples of Latin America.

This augurs well for the future. The exemplary level of collaboration that we have maintained over 40 years is our best guarantee for success as we tackle together the challenges of growth.

In fact, the current context requires it.

Thanks to rising political stability and the emergence of greater industrial and economic power in the Region, passenger and cargo traffic has grown at a healthy pace for some time now. And the trend is set to continue.

As more and more States successfully address their respective political and economic concerns, a greater proportion of their populations will become potential consumers of air travel.
Economic development should also stimulate the development of high-value industries that have the greatest need for fast long-distance travel.

There are other key drivers of demand for air travel in Latin America; the advent of low-cost carriers, improved technologies and better business practices, the accelerating liberalization of the air transport industry and the incessant migration of people to cities. Urbanization is creating a need to connect cities worldwide as never before and air travel is the mode of transportation best suited to provide global connectivity for people and goods.

How much growth are we talking about? The answer is contained in ICAO’s *Global Air Transport Outlook to 2030* published earlier this year.

For the period up to 2030, we expect world economic growth to remain at an average annual rate of 4.0 per cent. In line with that, scheduled passenger traffic worldwide measured in revenue passenger kilometers is forecast to increase at 4.6 per cent.

The good news is that airlines of Latin America can expect growth rates of 6.1 per cent, significantly higher than the world average.

The same applies to cargo. World scheduled air cargo traffic measured in freight tonne kilometers should increase at an annual rate of 5.3 per cent, while airlines of Latin America should post growth rates of 5.7 per cent, again higher than the world average.

And this is where we come back to the challenges of growth I mentioned a few moments ago.

More flights carrying more people and goods to more destinations than ever before means:

- increased airspace congestion and the risk to the safety and efficiency of air transport operations in general;
- greater airport congestion due to the increased number of passengers as well as stringent security measures, also with a potential financial impact on airline operations; and
- growing environmental pressures relating to greenhouse gas emissions, local air quality and noise around airports.

Then there is the potential, even dramatic shortage of pilots, mechanics and air traffic controllers and the equivalent requirement to accelerate training and certification for these aviation professionals.

There is the need for massive investments in ground infrastructure and air navigation systems to cope with a doubling of passengers and departures to 6 billion and 60 million respectively by 2030.

And we must find ways of ensuring the long-term viability of airlines and other stakeholders, by coming to grips with such issues as market access, air carrier ownership and control, fair and equitable competition, taxes and levies, and consumer protection.
I am sure you can think of many other challenges and so can I. The bottom line remains that we must all focus on the overall sustainability of the global air transport system if we are to reap the enormous benefits it has to offer in terms of economic, social and cultural development for everyone on our shrinking planet.

Fortunately, the solution is at hand. At the 38th Session of the ICAO Assembly this fall, our Member States adopted resolutions dealing with each and every one of these challenges. Don’t worry, I will not list them here. Many of you were at the Assembly and are aware of them. And they are all posted on the ICAO website.

The point I want to stress is that all of the resolutions, or solutions if you will, were developed through dialogue and consensus-building with Member States and stakeholders of the world aviation community representing various interests, including of course the industry.

Over the three years since the last Assembly in 2010 and the last one, the ICAO Secretariat conducted wide-ranging and well-attended outreach activities, including regional seminars and workshops, to foster constructive dialogue around strategies and work plans for addressing safety, security, environmental, economic and other critical regulatory issues.

The consultative exercise culminated in milestone conferences, meetings and strategies that laid out the flight plan for all to follow towards a sustainable future. It is now our responsibility, our duty to work together to implement these solutions.

In this way, we can perpetuate the vision of the Chicago Convention and the will of its Member States “that international civil aviation may be developed in a safe and orderly manner and that international air transport services may be established on the basis of equality of opportunity and operated soundly and economically”.

As we mark the 40th anniversary of the Commission, let us celebrate this spirit of global cooperation, let us renew our pledge to all work together for everyone in Latin America and everyone around the world. We are all connected, we are all part of the global society which air travel has helped to create, we all have a role to play.

I am sure that this is what went through the mind of Dr. Assad Kotaite as he spoke to the Conference on Latin American Civil Aviation Authorities in Mexico City, when LACAC came into being in December 1973.

It is what inspires me as I speak to you today. And it is certainly what will animate my successor as President of the Council, Dr. Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu of Nigeria, when he comes to meet with you.

As I will be leaving office at the end of this year, I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your support and encouragement over the years, as President of the Council, as Representative of Mexico on the Council, and throughout my aviation career.

I wish all of you success and happiness as you pursue your quest to improve and expand Latin American air services, within the global cooperative framework that continues to serve us so well.