



**Address by the Secretary General
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Dr. Fang Liu,
on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary
of the ICAO North American, Central American
and Caribbean (NACC) Regional Office**

(Mexico City, Mexico, 16 Feb 2017)

*Distinguished Ministers and Ambassadors,
Attending Directors General of ICAO NACC Member States,
ICAO NACC Regional Director, Mr. Melvin Cintron,
Distinguished friends and colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

1. It is my great pleasure to be back in Mexico City, and to be helping to celebrate this special 60th Anniversary of ICAO's North American, Central American and Caribbean (NACC) Regional Office.
2. It is also my great honour, on behalf of all of ICAO, to express our tremendous appreciation to the Government of Mexico for its generous support for this essential and well-appreciated Regional facility. ICAO's NACC Office today supports 21 States and 19 Territories, and this mandate would be significantly more challenging without your country's unwavering commitment.
3. Looking back for a moment on the history of this office, ICAO's operations in this part of the world commenced in line with our agency's establishment, immediately following the Second World War.
4. At that time, States were increasingly linking themselves by privatized air transport, with former military facilities and routes in every world region being transitioned to civilian use through the many Regional Route Service Organizations (RRSOs) established under ICAO.
5. In the ensuing years, it became clear that the number of these RRSOs could be rationalized for greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness, a process which ultimately led to the establishment of the seven Regional Offices and one Regional Sub-office which ICAO presently maintains.
6. While the ICAO North America Office was first established at our Headquarters building in 1948, in 1955, as part of the RRSO efficiency process, the ICAO Council expanded its mandate to include Caribbean States and Territories and agreed to evolve it into a full Regional Office.

7. The Council subsequently approved Mexico City as its new location, and the NACC office was officially inaugurated here on 15 February 1957.
8. Over the years, ICAO's Mexico City Office has driven many substantial achievements. In further remarks today my colleagues will be itemizing a number of these in greater detail, but I would nonetheless like to highlight a few of the more prominent ones for you here this morning, including for instance:
 - Its participation and leadership in the establishment of ICAO's very first Regional Aviation Safety Group, founded to support Pan-American States and providing a template which all subsequent Regional Aviation Safety Groups have looked to for guidance.
 - Its key coordinating role in the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake in 2009, and its important contributions to local airport and other aviation infrastructure rebuilding projects to facilitate emergency aid and normalized aviation operations.
 - And last but not least, its very strong leadership in recent years in support of ICAO's *No Country Left Behind* initiative. The NACC's strategic approach to this collaborative planning and monitoring work, based on transparent targets with clear lines of accountability, are being emulated by all of our Regional Offices demonstrating once again its proactive engagement and action on our most important priorities.
9. As I mentioned, these are but a few of the long list of items this office has helped ICAO to effectively assist States and industry with during its very long and storied history, but they certainly give us a sense of how essential this Regional Office's work has been over the years, and how depended upon it remains today.
10. And before we move on I would also like to re-stress the importance of the leadership that Regional Director Cintron and his team have realized in developing such practical planning and tactics in support of the *No Country Left Behind* initiative.
11. Under this campaign, ICAO is placing a much greater focus on the assistance and capacity-building which we provide through our Regional facilities, mainly in support of the more effective implementation of our global Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) in ICAO Member States.
12. Ever since I took office as Secretary-General, I have been striving for a strengthened ICAO regional presence as well as closer collaboration between Headquarters and the Regional Offices. It is my firm belief that by giving more responsibility and accountability to Regional Offices for engaging and coordinating directly with States, ICAO can ensure seamless organizational coordination at the global and regional level, which in turn enhances the capabilities of States to reflect their needs and address their specific issues in a regional context.

13. This helps to explain why 15 new Regional Office posts were created in 2016, focused mainly on safety and security assistance for Member States. I also assigned a regional affairs coordination function to the Strategic Planning, Coordination and Partnerships Office which I have newly established.
14. This office will be responsible for managing regional affairs coordination function, and has already been instrumental in aligning our organizational and regional operational plans.
15. I am grateful for the NACC Office's significant efforts to enhance its service delivery under this new framework, and to improve cooperation among the many partners it is accredited to here.
16. Of course, the fostering of wider and more effective cooperation for civil aviation objectives, whether regionally or globally, is what ICAO does best.
17. Ladies and gentlemen, ICAO is helping to lead the air transport sector in many important areas today, whether through the new Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation, or 'CORSIA', or by continuously enhancing and expanding our longstanding Global Plans for Aviation Safety and Air Navigation.
18. I also wish to highlight that a new Global Aviation Security Plan was also recently endorsed at the 39th Assembly, and that this is now projected to be completed by early 2018.
19. ICAO also has a key responsibility to be proactive on anticipating the latest technical developments, and in 2017 this work will be pursued through our 2nd Global Air Navigation Industry Symposium (GANIS), an Air Traffic Flow Management (ATFM) Global Symposium, and of course our continuing work on the safe and efficient integration of remotely-piloted aircraft and outer space operations.
20. 2017 is also an important year for sustainable alternative fuels for air transport, with related ICAO seminars culminating in a special high-level conference at our Headquarters in October.
21. In closing today, let me please stress once more that ICAO's regional presence here in Mexico City is nothing short of essential to the effective coordination of safe, secure and reliable air services.
22. As I noted earlier, ICAO is also very strongly aware of how important air transport connectivity is to North American, Central American and Caribbean States, especially in light of the fact that your region is currently responsible for more than 25% of international traffic.
23. We also are very much aware of how essential ICAO-compliant air services are to your wider objectives for sustainable socio-economic prosperity and development, and please let me reassure you that I stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Regional Director Cintron in confirming our commitment to helping you optimize your aviation benefits.

24. It is truly my great honour today to recognize and celebrate, on this 60th Anniversary of the ICAO NACC Regional Office, both the recent achievements of Melvin and his team, and those of the many former staff who helped the NACC Office to become such a beacon of leadership and assistance to its accredited States and territories.
25. On behalf of ICAO, I thank you all for your commitments, and your accomplishments.
26. Thank you.