



**Address by the Secretary General
of the International Civil Aviation Organization,
Raymond Benjamin
to the 6th Annual FAA International Aviation Safety Forum**

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I would like to thank the Organizers of this Safety Forum for the privilege of making my first public address as Secretary General of ICAO before such a prestigious international gathering of senior aviation professionals.

The theme you have chosen is apropos and thought provoking – stability in a volatile environment.

We certainly live in a volatile world. The first decade of this 21st century started with the worst terrorist attack involving civil aviation as both a target and a weapon. It is ending with arguably the worst economic crisis since the great depression of the 1930s. And we are more aware than ever before of the enormous economic, political and social consequences of climate change.

As IATA's Director General, Giovanni Bisignani, puts it - "Our industry is in survival mode...We must use this crisis as an opportunity for governments, partners and airlines to build a stronger industry." Angela Gittens, Director of ACI World, said earlier this year - "Erratic times have transformed a dynamic aviation sector into a volatile one."

There is no doubt that we need to come together as never before, regulators and industry, and align our respective responsibilities and obligations to ensure a more efficient operating environment. To bridge the gap between the regulator and the regulated, for the common good of our global society.

That is precisely what I see as part of the role of ICAO in promoting stability in a context that will probably remain volatile for some time to come.

That is the essence of ICAO. A global forum for Member States and major aviation stakeholders to cooperate in finding solutions to the pressing problems of the day. Reaching agreement on Standards and Recommended Practices that are implemented on a worldwide basis to produce a harmonized global aviation system. And safety is in our DNA.

This global collaborative process has made for an extremely safe and reliable air transport system. Of that we can be proud. But we certainly must not rest, not for one moment. We must be relentless in our pursuit of absolute safety.

It starts by facing the fact that we continue to be challenged by accidents.

To date in 2009, there have been seven fatal accidents on scheduled international air transport services around the world. This is equal to the average for the past 10 years for the same period and would suggest that we are doing neither better nor worse.

To adopt that view is misguided. A relatively stable safety record can lead to complacency or a false sense of accomplishment. We know by experience, if not instinctively, that an organization with a good safety record is not necessarily a safe organization. To paraphrase Jerome Lederer, the father of aviation safety and recipient of the ICAO Edward Warner Award, every accident, no matter how minor, is a failure of the system.

The as-yet unexplained and troubling accidents of the past few months should be reason enough to take a good look at the details behind the facts. What are the underlying organizational or operational factors that caused or contributed to these accidents and how can we avoid their repetition?

We must all join forces to not only reduce the number and the rate of accidents, but to ensure as well the full integrity of global air transport.

During this forum, you will be looking at a number of measures that will take us there.

Over the next few minutes, I would like to highlight three of which will be the focus of the Organization I now lead.

First and foremost is the continuing process of collaborating with our Member States to establish how well they are equipped to ensure that their respective national civil aviation systems implement and enforce ICAO standards and related procedures.

Our safety oversight audit programme has been effective in identifying major deficiencies in national oversight programmes and establishing action plans to correct them. Since 2006, with the consent and cooperation of member States, we made the audit results available on our public website.

This was an extremely important step forward.

As with all of you I am sure, I also strongly support the concept and the practice of transparency. Transparency can be a powerful incentive when used properly and effectively. It applies pressure for change and leads to positive transformation.

The question we must ask ourselves is: How will we use this information? If we are serious about conducting audits, we must be serious about following through. Collectively – States, industry and concerned stakeholders – we must do more to implement recommended action plans. Public and private donor organizations must be actively solicited to fund the projects that could significantly raise the level of safety in many parts of the world. I am committed to this course of action and I have already made contact with interested parties.

Another fundamental aspect of safety I want to focus on is the harmonization of rules and regulations. Let me give you a concrete example of collaboration in this area.

In the Spring of this year, a fatal accident in Buffalo, in the State of New York, raised the critical issue of pilot fatigue. I applaud the Federal Aviation Administration of the United States for moving quickly on developing new regulations concerning Fatigue Management. This will no doubt contribute to saving lives

You may be aware that ICAO has been involved in this general area for some time now. New provisions governing flight times, duty times and rest periods will become applicable in November and work is progressing well on fatigue risk management systems to augment the new prescriptive fatigue provisions. To expedite the additional work that is clearly necessary, we have formed a multi-national, multi-

organizational task force to examine current practices in industry, regulatory developments, operator requirements, and physiological and aeronautical factors. And I'd like to thank those who have agreed to work with us, including the FAA, to develop this internationally-harmonized approach. We plan to base this on best practices worldwide and will assess all of the factors involved in developing effective fatigue risk management solutions.

The third very promising area for improving aviation safety is the sharing of safety-related information, a concept the aviation community has been steadily moving toward. This is perhaps the area I am most excited about. We have the ability now to utilize a huge volume of data to provide information which will assist the global community in determining RISK. Safety RISK.

As I mentioned before, ICAO's safety oversight audit programme has been quite successful in processing information derived from audits and making that information available on our website.

IATA has also taken steps to promote safe practices among its member airlines. The fact that the Operational Safety Audit programme (IOSA) is a prerequisite for membership in the Association speaks volumes as to the commitment to operational safety. Other industry associations – ACI, CANSO, IFALPA and others - are likewise involved in safety initiatives of their own.

For their part, Civil Aviation Administrations have established sensitization programmes for the application of major organizational initiatives such as the initiation of the State Safety Program, and the Safety Management Systems for operators aiding in the widespread application of a safety culture throughout organizations and facilities. Regional Organizations have done the same.

And regional organizations, such as the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), centres on ensuring the highest levels of civil aviation safety through its work in the fields of accident investigation, Safety Analysis and a research programme. And specialized bodies like the Flight Safety Foundation and universities have collected and disseminated valuable information on how to improve safety.

Along the way, huge amounts of valuable and highly pertinent data has been amassed – from audits, accident investigations, flight safety analyses, independent reporting and research.

The problem is that these gold mines of information have been set up as silos. Today, they are not connected. Their potential effectiveness is dramatically reduced by evolving in isolation.

We now need to build partnerships to increase the collective power of this information. We need to connect all of these individual sources of information through a universally accessible safety database. In this age of transparency and speed of communications through the my Iphone (for example), there is absolutely no reason for anyone not to have access to safety-critical information.

I believe we have an obligation to make it available.

What we need is a global safety information exchange. We need it and we will have it.

I have already contacted a number of key aviation stakeholders, including IATA, and I have received strong support from all parties endorsing such a concept.

This topic will be at the forefront of ICAO's High Level Conference on Safety, which is planned to be held at ICAO in late March next year. That Conference, which I hope all of you will attend through your respective accredited Organizations, will lay the foundation for this global safety information exchange.

I believe ICAO could be repository and custodian of this database – to manage it, to ensure that it is kept current and that it is easily accessible. After all, ICAO Member States are ultimately and collectively responsible for ensuring the safety of the global air transport system and I see it as part of ICAO's mandate to facilitate this kind of undertaking. There should be no question of proprietary knowledge when safety is concerned.

I am convinced that this global and universal sharing of information can lead to more targeted regulations, better operating procedures and best practices.

And we need to bring on board the widest array of financial and political partners. The World Bank, donor states, consumer organizations, safety agencies, all have a stake in building this information infrastructure of the 21st century.

To paraphrase a fellow countryman of mine, Victor Hugo – This global safety information exchange is truly an idea whose time has come.

And it fits squarely with the vision we have at ICAO of a global air transport system consistently and uniformly operating at peak efficiency, providing optimum safety, security and sustainability.

Our mission, which flows from this vision, emphasizes our commitment to foster cooperation among Member States and the world aviation community in supporting the overall growth of a robust and sustainable air transport system.

My pledge is to work with all of you in this room and all stakeholders – regulators, industry and international organizations – to turn that vision into reality. I am also counting on you to help me bridge the gap between regulators and industry. We need to work more closely together, for only together can we make the kind of progress that will result in safer skies for all.

Ladies and gentlemen, to conclude, I would like to take the opportunity to point out a great example of the integration of my previous three points; strong active regulators, harmonized regulations and the sharing of safety information with the intent to improve safety.

That would be something very familiar to many of you in this room. That would be the Commercial Aviation Safety Team (CAST). CAST is a collaborative activity between government and industry whose sole purpose is to improve aviation safety. Working together, with hundreds of representatives from airlines, manufacturers, labor and government, they have reduced the U.S. fatal accident rate by 83 percent (from 1998 to 2008). CAST is a perfect example of environment that a strong, open minded regulator can provide - working in partnership with its industry - using harmonized and well understood regulation, sharing safety information in an open and transparent way.

I would like to congratulate CAST, not only on their extraordinary achievement in aviation safety, but on being the recent recipient of the highly coveted Collier Trophy by the U.S. National Aeronautic Association. CAST certainly is a great example of what can be achieved by harnessing the power of safety data and is a shining example of the power of collaboration for all of us. Congratulations to all of you involved in this effort.

Thank you for your kind attention.

