



**Address by the Secretary General of ICAO,
Mr. Raymond Benjamin,
to the
Regional Conference on Aviation Security**

“REUNIÓN SOBRE SEGURIDAD EN EL TRANSPORTE AÉREO”¹

(Mexico City, 16-17 February 2010)

1. This event is one of a series of regional summits on aviation security to take place over the next few months. The main purpose of these meetings is to help formulate a uniform, international response to the attempted sabotage of Northwest Flight 253 on 25 December 2009, and other potential threats to civil aviation thus building a global consensus. This response may take the form of a resolution before the ICAO Assembly this autumn, and possibly the convening of a high-level worldwide conference on aviation security at a date to be determined.
2. As the UN agency responsible for promoting the development of civil aviation, ICAO has moved swiftly to address the most recent threat, and is coordinating and harmonizing the international response. Our first action was to communicate with security authorities in all of our member States, encouraging them to conduct risk assessments and implement appropriate screening measures.
3. ICAO remains in close contact with its member States and the industry while awaiting the recommendations of its Aviation Security Panel, a multinational team of security experts. At the same time, we are taking an active part in this conference — and forthcoming conferences in other regions — with the goal of promoting the adoption of an appropriate, harmonized response to this latest incident.
4. In the meantime, the recent incident demands an immediate solution to safeguard civil aviation and restore public confidence. The emergency procedures implemented in the wake of 25 December, which included increased gate screening for U.S.-bound flights and passenger profiling, were necessary in light of the heightened level of risk. Although they have caused delays and inconvenience, the threat justified serious action. According to U.S. intelligence information, the attempted sabotage of Northwest Flight 253 is not an isolated incident, but part of a wider threat to international civil aviation.
5. The present emergency measures, however, are onerous and unsustainable over the long term. During the coming months, our challenge is to identify practical alternative measures that provide the same level of enhanced security.
6. Hand in hand with development of efficient and effective countermeasures is a need to improve how we share threat information. However, this requires that we first establish mechanisms for the purpose of exchanging sensitive information. This remains a highly delicate issue, and any exchange of information between States obviously has to be secure. Data collection is essential in combating terrorism. It might be feasible for ICAO, considering its leadership role, to assume the task of compiling such data from member States, as well as facilitating the exchange of threat information.

¹ Participating States: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, United States.

7. However this is something for the future, after the modalities are first developed, if there is agreement. There is a more immediate need, and that is for States to adopt and implement standardized requirements for those passenger data exchange programmes that already exist. I refer to Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record data schemes, more popularly known by their acronyms API and PNR. I am pleased to inform you that right now, at this moment, a working group of ICAO's Facilitation Panel is in the process of improving ICAO's guidelines on PNR. ICAO, in cooperation with the World Customs Organization (WCO) and International Air Transport Association (IATA), has begun updating the international guidelines for API programmes and the transfer of passenger manifests electronically.
8. Later this year, in May, the Facilitation Panel is expected to enhance existing international Standards on API, and possibly develop new provisions for PNR. This will strengthen the application of these data exchange programmes in the fight against terrorism. The Panel will also be asked to look at revising existing Standards on travel document security, to close any loopholes that may exist.
9. Broadly speaking, in the longer term we may have to fully integrate the collection and use of data with existing aviation security processes. Border security, for example, relies heavily on data collection, analysis and timely dissemination of threat information to front-line officers at border points, including international airports. We could adapt border security best practices to create an intelligence-driven security approach at airports. Of course, a comprehensive intelligence-driven approach would depend on effective data sharing and inter-agency cooperation at both the national and international levels.
10. The key pillar of border security is sound identity management and travel document security. ICAO's Machine Readable Travel Document (MRTD) Programme has been a global leader in setting travel document norms. Given today's challenges and the requirement to make better use of passenger data, it may be appropriate to expand and further exploit the MRTD Programme.
11. In addressing gaps in the security system, it is fitting to explore innovative technological solutions. This could include the widespread use of imaging technology — commonly referred to as body scanners — as one means of screening passengers, where appropriate. In adopting such an approach, however, we must take account of privacy, data protection and health issues.
12. One way in which ICAO could play an important role in enhancing security is by strengthening our security audit programme. At the same time, however, we would need to strengthen efforts to assist States that are unable, for one reason or another, to correct serious security deficiencies. A meeting of donor States to be held in Washington in early March, and to which I will participate, is a promising step in this direction. The meeting will explore ways to improve the coordination of assistance activities and strategically address how to fill the existing gaps in aviation security. This calls for closer collaboration through the ICAO mechanism for the sharing of information on assistance activities.
13. A web-based tool that might meet this requirement, or serve as a suitable model, is the recently upgraded ICAO Database of Assistance Projects, or IDAP. The database can be used to identify complementary or overlapping activities so that donor States and stakeholders may better leverage their resources. It is designed to allow ICAO to match project partners and develop strategic project proposals. In order for the database to be useful, it is essential that donor States provide input and utilize the data on assistance activities. This is why all donors are strongly encouraged to harness IDAP as a coordination tool.
14. I mentioned earlier that one way aviation security could be enhanced is through ICAO's Universal Security Audit Programme, referred to as the USAP. USAP is now well into its second cycle of audits, having completed 55 audits globally, including 13 in the North American, Caribbean (NACC) and South American (SAM) regions. This second cycle of audits focuses primarily on the State's ability to oversee the implementation of aviation security Standards, and has been expanded to include the security-related provisions of Annex 9.

15. The results of the second cycle of audits are focused on the level of implementation of the critical elements of an aviation security oversight system. As of 31 December 2009, the NACC and SAM regions' level of effective implementation of these critical elements was just above 50 per cent, which is slightly below the global average. Areas of specific concern, both globally and within these two regions, include the implementation of effective training programmes, the provision of sufficiently detailed procedures or requirements, and the implementation of comprehensive oversight activities addressing all areas related to aviation security.
16. As recommended by its Assembly, ICAO has introduced a degree of transparency for audit results, whereby all member States can view, at a secure website, a graph for each audited State showing the level of effective implementation of the oversight system critical elements. Reviewing this information enables donor States to focus assistance projects on those States having greater needs.
17. The enhancement of aviation security is very much an international effort. It has to be, when you consider that the consequences of an aviation security incident transcend national borders. An attempted sabotage of an airliner is an attack on the entire air transport system. Even when such aggression is unsuccessful, as on 25 December, it undermines confidence in aviation security.
18. Moreover, as part of the efforts to strengthen aviation security framework, ICAO has been working in the past few years to update the existing aviation security conventions. This year, a Diplomatic Conference will be held in Beijing, China, from 30 August to 10 September, to amend The Hague Convention of 1970 and the Montreal Convention of 1971.
19. In short, we face a worldwide problem. But with ICAO's leadership, a worldwide solution — characterized by harmonious, practical and effective measures — is certainly possible. Together we can find a way to keep civil aviation safe, secure, and prosperous.
