



**OPENING ADDRESS BY THE
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION (ICAO),
MR. RAYMOND BENJAMIN,
AT THE OPENING OF THE TWENTY FIRST MEETING
OF THE AVIATION SECURITY PANEL**

(Montréal – 22 March 2010)

1. It is my pleasure to welcome all participants to this Twenty-First Meeting of the Aviation Security Panel.
2. This meeting could not be more timely. As highlighted by the attempted sabotage of Northwest Flight 253 on 25 December, aviation security needs to be strengthened further, especially in terms of collecting and sharing information. In this regard, in recent weeks I have consulted with high-level officials, and also with representatives of the industry, in meetings in various locations, and participated in ministerial regional conferences in Mexico and Tokyo. I shall participate in more such meetings in the days ahead, including a Ministerial regional conference in Abuja and another one in the United Arab Emirates. Such discussions help build a global consensus on the appropriate response to the latest attack on the air transport system, and may culminate in a high-level conference on aviation security here in Montréal. Importantly, these discussions signal a resolve at the highest level to strengthen international cooperation and enhance coordination of aviation security activities.

3. ICAO relies on your expertise, however, to ensure this resolve leads to action. We need your advice to formulate the right strategy that will assure a suitable, effective response to the threat, and importantly, to proactively address potential future threats. We await your recommendations on a range of security subjects, but particularly the issues related to the recent incident. Our ultimate goal, as always, is to achieve implementation of uniform countermeasures that are commensurate with the level of threat found anywhere in the world.

4. As you are well aware, it was necessary to introduce more stringent security measures in the wake of 25 December. While unavoidable, however, such measures are not sustainable over the long term. I am confident the AVSEC Panel will agree on recommendations for sustainable measures that provide the same level of enhanced security as the emergency measures have done.

5. In developing countermeasures to new threats, they must of course be practical as well as appropriate for the level of threat, and based on effective risk management. We all recognize that the air transport system remains a highly attractive target for terrorist organizations; the challenge is to adapt to each new threat with minimum adverse impact on the air transport system. The security measures put in place must not unduly disrupt operations or increase the cost of doing business.

6. We have seen how difficult this adaptation can be with the threat of liquid explosives that came to light in 2006. I am encouraged by the progress made in developing new technology and processes that could eventually replace current procedures, which entail costly and inconvenient restrictions on liquids, aerosols and gels. This work recognizes that while the threat is real and present, it is equally important to facilitate air travel by finding ways to allow carriage of LAGs without compromising safety. In this regard, I am pleased to note that your meeting will consider new recommendations developed by the Secretariat Study Group on the Carriage of LAGs.

7. Over the next several days you have much to discuss, including of course the proposed Amendment 12 to Annex 17, as well as developments related to the Universal Security Audit Programme. You will also need to agree on a strategy for enhancing aviation security over the next several years. We attach great importance to your advice on the proposed future focus areas.

8. Before I close, it may interest you to know that the Secretariat itself is undergoing changes with the aim of strengthening the AVSEC Programme. A new AVSEC Branch has been in place since 1 January, a restructuring that reflects the importance attached to this work. Under the revised structure, our various aviation security-related activities (regulatory, audits and assistance), will be under one roof, so to speak, enhancing coordination between different Sections. Staff for additional technical posts are now being recruited, and I am especially pleased to announce today the appointment of the chief for the new AVSEC Branch, Mr. Jim Marriott.

9. It gives me great pleasure to declare open this Twenty-First Meeting of the Panel. I look forward to receiving the report on your activities at the end of the week.

10. Let me conclude by expressing my thanks to all of you. Without the ongoing efforts of the various Panel working groups, as well as your continued dedication and commitment to meeting our objectives, it would not be possible to enhance aviation security. You have important work to do, and I wish you every success in your deliberations.

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