



**Address by the Secretary General of ICAO  
Mr. Raymond Benjamin  
to the  
2nd Pan-African Aviation Training Coordination Conference  
(Cairo, Egypt, 22-24 June 2010)**

1. I am delighted to join you for this important conference on aviation training.
2. This is for me an opportunity to learn firsthand and to discuss how Africa plans to ensure the sustained availability of competent and qualified aviation personnel – an essential condition to the development of a safe and financially healthy air transport industry on the continent.
3. Yours is certainly not the only region to face a shortage of pilots, mechanics and air traffic controllers, but the problem here is more acute.
4. ICAO's safety oversight programme, for example, identified the lack of qualified aviation personnel as a major deficiency in many African States.
5. Also, in a separate worldwide ICAO study, preliminary data suggest that between 2010 and 2030, Africa will need approximately 3,500 new pilots every year, while it has a reported annual training capacity of about 1,000 pilots.
6. This shortcoming could prevent the air transport sector from meeting projections that would see it grow faster than the world average during this decade.
7. Moreover, you have to compete with other countries and other industries in attracting and retaining human resources that are absolutely necessary for operational and safety oversight functions.
8. These realities must be faced decisively by regulators, industry and training organizations, working closely together to bridge the gap between training needs and training capacities across States and across regions in Africa.
9. Over the next three days, you will be considering solutions to these and other issues, and making appropriate recommendations. I am very much looking forward to that.
10. For my part, I would like to highlight ICAO initiatives to support aviation training in Africa.
11. One of these is the continued collection of data from States and services providers, in order to identify training needs and resources currently available. This was carried out in collaboration with the African Aviation Training Experts Working Group established under ACIP – ICAO's AFI Comprehensive Implementation Programme. I take this opportunity to commend the work of the Group and to thank them for their precious involvement in the project.

12. As a result, we were able to measure the gap between training needs and existing capacities in a number of African cities throughout the Continent. A database was developed to store the information and ICAO stands ready to provide assistance in maintaining the database and analyzing training-related trends.
13. We also learned that a large number of institutes in Africa have been training pilots, air traffic controllers and mechanics for decades now and that many of those facilities are quite limited in scope. They do not possess the critical mass of resources and clientele to meet an increasing demand.
14. The most viable option is to pool and connect the strengths and resources of these institutions. In addition to obvious economies of scale, the training dispensed would meet other criteria such as harmonization, standardization and quality assurance.
15. In ICAO's view, this is the most productive and effective approach, one where everybody wins – regulators, industry, training institutions and, of course, the travelling public and citizens at large.
16. The success you have achieved in Africa in the development of regional safety organizations can serve as a model for setting up regional training organizations, to make full use of the experience, expertise and networks of individual centres.
17. The other initiative I want to mention relates to the lack of qualified and experienced inspectors in many African States. The certification and supervision of licensed personnel, air operators, maintenance organizations and aerodromes cannot be carried out effectively without such inspectors.
18. Again under the ACIP programme, ICAO launched Government Safety Inspectors and Instructors training courses that we hope, in a short period of time, will meet the needs of all African States. We intend to make this available by training the required number of instructors and assisting several training institutes to acquire the capability in order to in turn provide such training.
19. Having said this, I would like to submit three additional points for your consideration during this conference.
20. One is that the training industry has taken on huge proportions worldwide, yet it is still not represented globally by an umbrella organization. Airlines, airports, air traffic controllers and pilots have for years been united behind their respective industry bodies. This has allowed them to effectively and collectively make their positions and concerns known in international forums and before government regulatory authorities, including ICAO. More important perhaps, it has made it possible to develop widespread consensus on harmonizing and implementing policies, generally improving the efficiency of the global air transport system.
21. I believe this is an idea whose time has come and I will be actively promoting the concept. When it materializes, it would be one more tool at the disposal of the African aviation community to provide the required number of qualified and competent aviation personnel.

22. The second point I'd like to make refers to competency. ICAO often receives requests to establish licenses for various groups of aviation professionals. We believe that what is more important is for aviation professionals to be in a position to clearly demonstrate they are competent and qualified. This implies that the quality of the training offered is critical, as is the training process established and reviewed by States. What is as important is that these training programmes be harmonized around the world. And finally, training programmes should be continually updated to make sure that they correspond to real and current technical and operational requirements. Again, these are fundamentals that can serve Africa well.
23. The final point is that training is not the ultimate cure to safety deficiencies. As important are efficient operating systems and a well-established safety culture throughout organizations. When a crisis arises, there is sometimes a tendency to 'blame and train', in the hope that more training will cure the problem. This may lead to overcompensation, with more training than required in some areas and not enough in others. We have also seen cases where people trained in one discipline are assigned in another. This is clearly counterproductive.
24. These subjects and many others are the focus of the Next Generation of Aviation Professionals Task Force created by ICAO in May 2009. The mandate of the Task Force is to promote enhancements to training for flight crew, air traffic management and maintenance personnel, so as to meet the demands of new procedures and increasingly complex technologies.
25. I invite you to take part in this global effort. It will enable you to learn how your colleagues in other parts of the world are addressing the problem and to share your own practices in tackling what is essentially a global phenomenon.
26. You should then be in a much better position to both fulfil your responsibilities under the Chicago Convention and reap the benefits of active participation in the global marketplace.
27. My pledge to you is to work with all stakeholders – regulators, industry and international organizations – so that together we can bridge the gap between training needs and capacities required.
28. Still, in the final analysis, the responsibility for improving training in Africa rests with each and every one of you. Under the leadership of ICAO, the international aviation community is determined to assist, yet solutions must be by Africans, for Africans.
29. I thank you for your kind attention and I wish you a productive and stimulating conference.

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