



Address by the Secretary General of ICAO
Mr. Raymond Benjamin
to the
Flight Safety Foundation
“Aviation Safety: Regulating, Implementing, Training” Conference
(Nicosia, Cyprus, 27 April 2011)

1. Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a pleasure to speak to you today on a subject that is foremost in our minds.
2. For all of us, aviation Safety is the first priority. Safety is the raison d’être for the Flight Safety Foundation. It is the credo of IATA and other aviation organizations. And it is at the heart of ICAO’s mission and that of its Member States – to ensure the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation.
3. Every year, millions of passengers are transported safely through scheduled air operations. Despite the economic downturn, demand for international air transport continues to grow. Our latest global estimates show an increase of over 8% in international scheduled passenger traffic. Even with this exceptional growth, aviation remains our safest mode of transportation – with a remarkably low global accident rate of roughly 4.1 accidents per million departures. But, as we all know, this record differs significantly from region to region.
4. For the flying public, it is a question of trust. Flights might be delayed, the ride might be bumpy, luggage might not always get there at the same time as their owners, but in the end, travellers expect that no harm will come to them during their journey.
5. Our job is to honour that trust - consistently: every minute, every hour, and every day.
6. Have we been successful? Yes, remarkably so. By all accounts, aviation is much safer today than it was when ICAO and IATA began keeping record over 65 years ago.
7. Can we improve this record? Of course we can – and we must. So the question is - how?
8. As an Industry, we always place safety as a top issue, knowing full well that an unsafe system cannot last in the long run.
9. Since its inception, ICAO evolved as an organization, to meet the challenges posed by a rapidly changing operational, regulatory and political environment.
10. During the early days of aviation, our focus was on improving technology, both on board aircraft and in terms of infrastructure. This helped significantly reduce the accident rate at the time.
11. Next, we looked into human factors and the relationship between human beings and technology. Again this resulted in a further reduction in the accident rate.

12. We then tackled organizational issues, to understand how human factors fit into the bigger picture. The promotion of a safety culture throughout States and industry and a systems approach to safety resulted once again in positive results.
13. So where do we go from here?
14. Pushing the “safety first” concept to its limits means that we would have to shut down the system on a regular basis.
15. We would only build 4000 meter runways with 240 meter runway end safety areas. We would stop operating as soon as the weather slightly deteriorates. We could allow much fewer aircraft in the sky at any one time and triple the number of maintenance procedures.
16. In this scenario, service providers would spend a lot more money and make a lot less profit; a situation that would surely bankrupt most of them.
17. The only way to avoid this scenario is to consider safety as an integral part of the business process. Decisions must be made based on in-depth analysis of safety-related risks. We must protect the wellbeing of passengers as well as the financial viability of airlines, airport operators and other service providers that need to meet a bottom line. It is not a question of balancing safety against profits but rather making sure that we can achieve both concurrently.
18. Over the past few years, we implemented new, forward-looking initiatives. We evolved from a purely prescriptive approach of standard making towards a more performance-based approach, which is a fundamental shift.
19. ICAO’s new provisions concerning the State Safety Programme are a good example of this shift. They provide regulatory authorities with more flexibility in the way they conduct safety oversight.
20. The implementation of safety management systems, by service providers, actively promoted by ICAO, is also leading to a performance-based approach to safety management. Our ultimate goal with this approach is to achieve significant safety improvements in a cost-effective manner.
21. Together, safety management systems and State safety programmes will make it easier to integrate safety activities into the business processes of service providers. For example, if we consider both safety and business metrics when building runways, this might result in the decision to balance the length of runways with more efficient arresting systems, all the while ensuring safety is maintained.
22. The money saved through this approach can be invested in other critical areas that can further enhance safety, from training to purchasing new equipment.
23. I want to emphasize that ICAO isn’t just preaching a more performance-based approach to enhancing safety. In the last few years, we became more action-oriented. Not content with only advancing the cause of safety management practices for regulators and industry, we instituted safety management within the Organization.
24. We developed a plan for managing safety, focused on the allocation of resources based on safety risks. Our new Safety Framework addresses policy and standardization, safety analysis and monitoring, implementation and collaboration with key stakeholders.

25. Our highest risk area is runway safety. Occurrences associated with runway safety, when combined, represent the largest category of accidents on a global scale. We partnered with key stakeholders to deliver a Global Runway Safety Symposium in May of this year, followed by practical workshops in each region of the world from 2011 to 2013. ICAO, IATA and a number of other contributors joined forces to develop a set of related operational tools that will be made available later this year.
26. In August, we will roll out new standards for Fatigue Management during another Global Symposium. During this event, ICAO and IATA will deliver new guidance material on this subject, developed by our collective Fatigue Risk Management Task Force.
27. On a more strategic front, ICAO has developed a Safety Risk Management System which allows us to identify risk and prioritize our limited assistance capability by allocating resources to support those States identified as having the highest aviation safety risk. ICAO works with these States to develop Comprehensive Action Plans specific to each State's unique aviation safety risks. We then work with our aviation partners and donors to coordinate the assistance required to enable the States to implement their Comprehensive Action Plans.
28. In order to manage the information generated by this collaboration at the global level, ICAO completed the development of a Global Safety Information Exchange mechanism and system. During last year's ICAO Assembly, we signed an agreement with the European Commission, the U.S. Department of Transportation and IATA to share safety information under this Exchange concept. This allows us to conduct analysis from a variety of sources of safety information from several sectors of aviation. This collaboration will increase regulatory efficiency worldwide and will most certainly save lives.
29. As part of our new approach to safety management, we are developing tools needed to conduct proactive analyses that will ultimately lead to safety improvements in the global aviation system. A concrete example of ICAO's improved analysis capabilities is the Integrated Safety Trend Analysis and Reporting system, also known as iSTARS. This system provides crucial information to guide policy decisions and to prioritize the use of limited safety resources. iSTARS accomplishes this through the analysis of various types of data in order to create multidimensional assessments of emerging safety issues. This system is already operational and available online on our website.
30. All of these new activities and many more that are being finalized or are in the planning stage come together under the umbrella of ICAO's latest Global Aviation Safety Plan, due out at the end of this year.
31. This is a game changer. It will have a significant impact on improving aviation safety worldwide for years to come. And it will do so in tune with the times.
32. ICAO is shifting gears when it comes to managing safety. We are more strategic, efficient and effective in working with all aviation stakeholders in order to build a global air transport system that is not only safer but more secure and more environmentally sustainable than ever before.
33. That is the promise. It is up to us to deliver.