



**ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF ICAO,  
MR. RAYMOND BENJAMIN,  
TO THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON AVIATION SECURITY**  
(Caracas, 7 February 2012)

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to this Regional Conference on Aviation Security. I sincerely thank the Government of Venezuela for hosting this meeting and for reaffirming its commitment to strengthening aviation security through greater regional and international cooperation.

This is the fifth in a series of such conferences. The first four were held in South Asia, Africa, Europe and the Asia/Pacific Region. The final event will take place in April in the Middle East Region.

In all cases, the objective was, and remains, to support the implementation of the Declaration on Aviation Security adopted by the ICAO Assembly in October 2010. At the same time, we are seeking consensus on critical aviation security issues and priorities as we prepare for the global High-level Conference on Aviation Security from 12 to 14 September 2012 at ICAO Headquarters, in Montréal.

Here in Caracas, we can feed into this process by providing the perspective of the Americas. Over the next few days, we will consider aviation security in vast regions encompassing 44 States and territories, all with a stake in the outcome of this meeting and of the High-level Conference.

ICAO's focus is on supporting aviation security initiatives throughout the hemisphere. Most recently, we established a new Aviation Security position in our Lima Office dedicated to aviation security matters in the South America Region. This will complement the work of the AVSEC Regional Officer in the Mexico Office. I look forward to appointing the new Regional Officer, AVSEC for the South American Region in the coming weeks.

Another regional development I want to highlight is the progress made by the Aviation Security and Facilitation Regional Group. It was established a year ago under the auspices of the Latin American Civil Aviation Commission and ICAO in an effort to create synergy among the Regions. The group has since agreed on a common action plan aimed at further strengthening aviation security throughout the Americas.

Robust regional strategies are crucial to effectively implement the Assembly Declaration. With your valuable insight, we can build on the results of the previous regional conferences, where participants agreed on a set of concrete actions to ensure that regional needs would be addressed as we move forward.

Together, we can adopt a Joint Statement for the Americas that takes into account your unique challenges. I strongly encourage you to openly share experiences, concerns and especially lessons learned with other participants during this conference.

I have no doubt that cooperation will be at the centre of your discussions. Cooperation is the hallmark of global aviation and it is the catalyst for our being here today.

Most of you certainly remember the failed attack on a commercial airliner in December 2009, when a passenger attempted to detonate an explosive device while in flight from Amsterdam to Detroit. Soon after that incident, I proposed that Ministerial-level conferences be held in various parts of the world to respond to such new and emerging threats to civil aviation.

In every case, States committed to protect their air transport system against all forms of terrorism. They emphasized the importance of taking collective responsibility and action, fully recognizing that terrorism is a global problem that requires global solutions.

These Ministerial meetings ultimately resulted in the Assembly Declaration of October 2010, which is an unequivocal statement of intent to eradicate this insidious menace to the integrity of the global air transport system.

At ICAO, we are now solidly in the process of turning words into concrete action.

Where the Declaration urges States to strengthen security screening procedures and adopt modern technologies to detect prohibited articles, we are working with national aviation security authorities and industry to develop future passenger screening checkpoint models. The goal is to better integrate new technologies, intelligence and specific techniques to detect both objects and persons that may pose a threat.

And where the Declaration calls for strengthened and harmonized measures and best practices for air cargo security, we have adopted new and more stringent security standards in Annex 17. The most notable is a requirement for States to establish a supply chain security process for air cargo. This measure is especially important in light of the incident of October 2010, when explosives were found in two parcels that were to be transported on cargo aircraft.

ICAO has also intensified its collaboration with the World Customs Organization and other regulatory agencies to develop appropriate new security controls for air cargo. Here we want to achieve the highest level of end-to-end air cargo supply chain security without causing unnecessary delays in the movement of goods.

In the legal domain, we were instrumental in establishing new air law instruments to criminalize actions that threaten aviation security. The ICAO diplomatic conference of September 2010 in Beijing was a milestone in the development of a comprehensive legal framework for international civil aviation. In light of its ramifications, I urge States to ratify this Convention without delay.

Finally, ICAO is implementing an aviation security assistance strategy based on sound risk-management principles. This means we will focus our resources and attention on Member States with the greatest need for assistance in building and maintaining a robust security framework. This strategy relies heavily on aviation security audits to identify deficiencies. The work is funded both from the ICAO budget and from generous contributions from donor States.

Clearly, the priorities of States are ICAO's priorities, and we must all join forces to eliminate the continuing threat of terrorism. Conferences, such as this one in Caracas, enhance collaborative regional efforts, shape consensus, and set the stage for the global aviation security conference in September.

I assure you that all current and emerging issues will be up for discussion in Montréal, including staff screening as a measure to address the so-called "insider threat" at airports, and the evolution of ICAO's security audit programme. On the agenda will be another subject of prime concern for many States – the sustainability of security measures.

Safeguarding civil aviation against all forms of unlawful interference is a constant and formidable challenge. What I expect from this Caracas conference is for us, to agree on specific actions that reflect the particular security needs of the North American, Central American and Caribbean, and South American regions. In this way, we can together significantly contribute to a worldwide solution to the problem of terrorism in the sky.

I thank you in advance for your candid and constructive input to our common challenge.

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