



Address by the Secretary General of ICAO
Mr. Raymond Benjamin
to the
Regional Conference on Aviation Security
(Manama, 10-11 April 2012)

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to Bahrain for this very important event.

This Conference is the culmination of a series of regional conferences focused on aviation security, and I wish to begin by extending my sincere gratitude to Bahrain for hosting the meeting and for reaffirming its commitment to strengthening aviation security through greater regional and international cooperation.

Further proof of this commitment is that we will have the pleasure of having Mr. Ahmed Nemat Ali, the Assistant Undersecretary for Aviation Services in the Department of Civil Aviation Affairs of Bahrain, chairing the meeting, so thank you very much for your support.

As I mentioned earlier, previous events were held in South Asia, Africa, Europe, Asia/Pacific, as well as the Americas and the Caribbean, with the aim of supporting the implementation of the Declaration on Aviation Security adopted by the ICAO Assembly in 2010. These regional meetings have also been critical to gather consensus on aviation security issues and priorities in preparation for the global High-level Conference on Aviation Security which will be held at ICAO Headquarters in Montréal, from 12 to 14 September 2012.

Now, with your valuable insight, we will be able to feed into this process the Middle East perspective and build on the results of the previous conferences in which participants agreed on concrete actions reflecting regional needs.

Robust regional strategies are crucial to effectively implement the Assembly Declaration. Together, we can adopt a Joint Statement for the Middle East that takes into account the unique challenges you face. I strongly encourage you to share your experiences and especially lessons learned with other conference participants.

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.

I am sure you will remember the thwarted 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 the 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 fully engaged in turning words into concrete action.

Where the Declaration urges States to strengthen security screening procedures and use 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 — Security. 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 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 cargo security, without causing unnecessary delays in the movement of goods.

In the legal domain, ICAO has been 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 importance, I urge States to take steps to sign and ratify this convention without delay.

Finally, ICAO is implementing an aviation security assistance strategy based on sound risk-management principles. This means we are focusing 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 our aviation security audits to identify deficiencies. The work is funded both from the ICAO budget and by financial and in-kind contributions from States.

In addition to States most in need, our assistance activities benefit all regions. Indeed, the Bahrain Conference presents an excellent opportunity for Middle Eastern States to open a dialogue with ICAO on assistance or partnership opportunities. I encourage you to consider your objectives and needs, and talk to the ICAO team over the next few days about how we could work together to enhance aviation security.

In recent months, ICAO has committed new resources to aviation security activities at the regional level. We have established posts dedicated exclusively to aviation security matters in ICAO Offices located in Paris, Lima and, I am pleased to inform you, in Cairo. These new Regional Officers will work closely with their counterparts at regional bodies and notably, in this region, with the Arab Civil Aviation Commission. On that note, I am pleased to see that the Arab Civil Aviation Commission (ACAC) is represented here, and I look forward to their contribution to our discussions.

As we strive to enhance aviation security, 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 Bahrain,

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. I am confident this Conference will rise to the challenge by agreeing on actions that address the particular needs of the region. By doing so, it will also contribute to a worldwide solution to terrorism in the sky.

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

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