

**Address by the Secretary General of
the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Raymond Benjamin
to the
Ministerial Briefing on the Comprehensive
Regional Implementation Plan for Aviation Safety in Africa (AFI Plan)**

ICAO Headquarters, Montreal Canada, 23 September 2013

Honourable Ministers,
Directors General,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is an honour to address you at this Ministerial Briefing on ICAO's Comprehensive Regional Implementation Plan for Aviation Safety in Africa, or AFI Plan.

2. I am particularly pleased to see such an overwhelming turn-out of key representatives from African States, represented by Ministers responsible for air transport and respective Directors General of Civil Aviation. We also have in attendance important international and regional organizations, aviation safety partners and financial institutions, and I would stress that your shared commitment to this process is a clear indication of the level of importance now associated with aviation safety in your region, as well as the recognition that all of us must continue to cooperate even more effectively toward our shared objective of the improvement of aviation safety in Africa.

3. Before going into more depth on ICAO's activities with respect to the AFI Plan, let me recall a few basic truths about Africa.
4. As you know, African skies have drastically changed over the last few decades, with the emergence of new African carriers. Between 2002 and 2012, progress in the liberalization of traffic rights, coupled with the 4 per cent annual economic growth rate for the African continent, resulted in 407 new routes between Europe and Africa, 623 within Africa, and 91 between Africa and the Middle East.
5. Since the AFI fleet is one of the oldest in the world, the resulting need for new aircraft is enormous. In that context, I would like to remind you how the 2001 Cape Town Convention on mobile equipment for aircraft is helping to facilitate the financing of new aircraft. As of today, 11 African States have ratified this Convention and it is promising for the future.
6. The chances are therefore high that in the coming years Africa will likely become the equivalent of today's Middle East. But to realize the full potential of its air transport sector, Africa will need to vigorously address its challenges and especially do more with respect to modernizing its regulatory framework and airport and air navigation infrastructure.
7. I'll leave you with these views as we return now to the purpose of our meeting this morning.

8. The AFI Plan was first established by ICAO's 36th Assembly in 2007 and a new Assembly Resolution on this effort will be presented in the coming days. Since its onset the Plan was designed, planned and has been implementing its work programme on the basis of three important areas of focus:

- Enabling States to establish and maintain an effective and sustainable safety oversight system.
- Assisting States to resolve identified deficiencies within a reasonable time.
- And enhancing the general aviation safety culture within relevant African service providers.

9. As of 1 January 2011, in consideration of the important assistance roles played by ICAO's AFI Regional Offices, I decided to integrate the activities of the AFI Plan into the work programmes of Regional Director Belayneh at ICAO's Eastern and Southern Africa Office, and Regional Director Jallow in our Western and Central African Office. To the credit of these gentlemen, and of course to the many others who have contributed to recent successes in this regard, the AFI Plan has since reached the majority of its milestones.

10. Of the many achievements led by our Regional Offices which have brought us to this point, some of the more noteworthy include:
 - The establishment and strengthening of Regional Safety Oversight Organizations across the continent.
 - The delivery of training supporting Africa's aviation safety inspectors and service providers, and the creation of the first Association for African Aviation Training Organizations (AATO).
 - And lastly the establishment of ICAO *Plans of Action* to support States in both the resolution of their Significant Safety Concerns and the effective implementation of ICAO's *Critical Elements of a State Safety Oversight System*.
11. Despite these achievements however, all of us must recognize that we have a long way to go in achieving all of the objectives and milestones necessary to realizing an enhanced level of safety in African aviation.
12. It was in recognition of this fact in March of this year that the last AFI Plan Steering Committee meeting recommended that the Plan's focus be expanded beyond Personnel Licensing, Operation of Aircraft and Airworthiness, to also include Air Navigation Services, Aerodromes and Ground Aids, and Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation.

13. These added components will now enable the AFI Plan to better align with the decisions and targets adopted during the Ministerial Conference on Aviation Safety held in Abuja, Nigeria in July 2012, and which was later endorsed by the Assembly of Heads of States of the African Union in January 2013.
14. But let us be clear that this planned expansion cannot happen by itself. Its effective realization requires the continued engagement of the relevant authorities responsible for civil aviation in Africa, significant support from ICAO and its aviation safety partners, as well as considerable financial and resource investments.
15. Over the next two hours, we shall receive presentations and engage in interactive sessions on the role of air transport in supporting sustainable economic growth and prosperity in Africa, in addition to the current status of aviation safety on the African continent.
16. Mr. Belayneh and Mr. Jallow will also present to us a detailed account of the achievements of the initiatives undertaken thus far and a summary of what will be required to ensure the successful continuation of the AFI Plan into the next triennium, including the expansion of its activities.

17. Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to reiterate the need to maintain our current momentum in order to achieve the effective implementation of the expanded AFI Plan and the high-level targets set-out by the Abuja Ministerial Conference.
18. Our combined efforts and commitments are already showing tangible and, in some cases such as runway safety, significant results, many of which will be highlighted in the more detailed presentations to follow.
19. I encourage you all to continue working together toward this important goal and wish you a very successful meeting.

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