



WELCOME MESSAGE BY THE ICAO SECRETARY GENERAL,
MR. RAYMOND BENJAMIN
TO THE ICAO AFI AVIATION SAFETY SYMPOSIUM

(Dakar, Senegal, 27-28 May 2014)

Good morning everyone.

It's my great pleasure to welcome you today to ICAO's *Africa-Indian Ocean (AFI) Aviation Safety Symposium*.

Today we will be jointly reviewing the status of aviation safety and air navigation performance in the AFI Region. In doing so, we will focus on the progress made in attaining the Abuja Safety Targets endorsed by the AU Heads of State in January 2013, and of course the challenges and opportunities as we continue to pursue our goals.

You may recall that during the Ministerial briefing on the status of aviation safety in Africa, organized prior to our 38th Assembly last autumn, information was provided on the assistance and capacity building activities of the ICAO AFI Plan, and the resulting progress achieved by States in implementing effective safety oversight.

It was also indicated that the AFI Plan would be expanded to include Air Navigation Services, Aerodromes and Aircraft Accident Investigation areas. It is ICAO's view that this expansion in the scope of the AFI Plan will be a critical stepping stone in meeting your Abuja Safety Targets.

ICAO has been very encouraged by the level of commitment shown up to this point by African States. However, continued political will is still required in order to succeed. Your commitment is primarily demonstrated through the establishment and strengthening of autonomous Civil Aviation Authorities with independent regulatory oversight and sustainable sources of funding.

Efforts have also been focused on the establishment of sustainable Regional Safety Oversight Organizations that can support an effective monitoring of safety in the different sub-regions. This topic has generated interest and enthusiasm on the part of African States, but also has posed challenges of sustainability and coordination that need to be addressed. This Symposium is expected to generate important outcomes to bring a number of such entities that currently exist in the region to work closer together. Ultimately, it is up to African States to make these Regional Safety Oversight Organizations work.

The international community is thankful for the support provided by all aviation safety partners in contributing to the realization of the Abuja priorities and targets. I encourage African States and partners to continue securing sufficient funding sources and practical support to collaboratively achieve these common objectives.

As we will recognize throughout this event, there are certain positive safety performance results which ICAO has seen in Africa over the last several years, largely as a result of our intensified cooperation.

For instance, between 2010 and 2013 the accident rate in Africa has fallen by 45 per cent, from 16.8 accidents per million departures to 9.3. Notably, the number of fatal accidents over this same period dropped from 3 to 1 per year.

Our common challenge remains how to transform this development into a sustained positive trend through collaborative partnership among the relevant stakeholders. This is partly the objective of this Symposium and I am confident that it can be attained.

ICAO's long-term planning for aviation safety in Africa also brings to mind the shortage of skilled personnel that will be faced by both operators and State regulators as air transport networks continue to expand through 2030.

Meeting the portion of these needs which are projected for Africa will require a tripling of the current continent-wide training capacity now in place.

This is surely a challenge for Africa but it is also an opportunity, and I would encourage you all to become better acquainted with ICAO's role in the field of training and all that it will have to offer to your region.

You are also encouraged to support the newly established Association of African Aviation Training Organizations which will serve as the framework for closer cooperation and harmonization of training requirements as well as standardization and quality assurance.

With regard to the lack of safety inspectors in the Region, the cooperation between ICAO and AFCAC has facilitated the establishment of a pool of qualified and experienced African inspectors to assist States in addressing safety oversight deficiencies.

As you know, the significant projected growth of air traffic in Africa will further require huge investments for ground infrastructure and air navigation systems. I would encourage you to consider the long-term economic development and tax-based returns which will derive from these investments, primarily by maximizing your respective tourism, foreign market access and other business sector potentials.

As you may recall, the 38th Session of our Assembly approved a updated *Global Air Navigation Plan* and *Global Aviation Safety Plan*.

In particular, the Global Air Navigation Plan will assist you on air navigation planning, ensuring that you invest wisely with respect to the technologies and capabilities that the African aviation transportation system needs.

I applaud your collaborative decision that led to the establishment of the African Flight Procedure Programme (FPP), right here in Dakar, to support across Africa a smart implementation of Performance Based Navigation, our number one air navigation priority. The objective of this important initiative is to improve safety and efficiency of air navigation while reducing the impact of flight operations on the environment.

Let me put on record my sincere thanks to those stakeholders who did not spare any efforts to ensure the establishment of the African FPP Programme. I look forward to welcoming those parties that have already expressed their commitment to this initiative, to the signing ceremony for the official launching of the Programme's activities. I would like to call on more States and partners for the adherence and support for the programme.

Furthermore, it is remarkable that the Abuja Declaration and its safety targets served as an example for the establishment of the priorities and targets in other regions of the World. All these priorities and targets are based on the current Global Aviation Safety Plan.

Now is the time for the Regional Aviation Safety Groups to facilitate and monitor the attainment of global and regional targets, and to formulate updates to the Global Aviation Safety Plan as necessary. I invite the RASG-AFI to propose these updates to the Second High-level Safety Conference to be held in Montreal, Canada in February 2015.

I am also pleased to share with you that earlier this month, ICAO launched the new Regional Performance Dashboards. For Africa, these dashboards provide real-time monitoring on the achievements of the Abuja targets as well as key efficiency performance indicators.

ICAO's 2014 Safety Report, and inaugural annual Air Navigation Report, have now both been published and are available on our website. Regional reports developed by the Regional Aviation Safety Groups also provide a holistic picture of the situation in each Region.

It is ICAO's objective that these annual reports and online tools greatly improve transparency and accountability, both on a regional and a global basis. The analysis derived from these reporting tools will also contribute to update the Global Aviation Safety Plan.

Ladies and gentlemen, as of 7 December this year, ICAO will have been serving the global aviation community for some 70 years.

Much of this history has taken place on other continents of the world, but Africa now stands poised to play an essential role in the future growth of our global system, and our Organization has been very encouraged by its recent progress and commitment.

Finally, I wish you very productive discussions here over the coming days and thank you for your kind attention.