



ICAO

**Keynote Address
by the Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Raymond Benjamin,
to the 2015 Global Airport Leaders' Forum (GALF 2015)**

(Dubai, UAE, 11 May 2015)

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1. Good morning ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues.
 2. I would like to begin today by expressing my deepest thanks and appreciation to His Highness, Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of Dubai's Civil Aviation Authority, Chairman of Dubai Airports, and Chairman and Chief Executive of the Emirates Airline Group, for extending the gracious invitation to speak to you today.
 3. Looking to the projected doubling of air traffic by 2030, and taking note as well of some unfortunate but rather high-profile accidents of late, I wished to take a moment and stress from the outset of these remarks that Safety remains our top priority in civil aviation.
 4. As 2014 and its intense media spotlights have made very clear to us, the public trust which is so critical to air transport viability, and profitability let us not forget, depends first and foremost on how safely we operate our global network.
 5. Fortunately, we are very good at being safe. One could even say we have gotten too good given the sometimes nonsensical level of scrutiny our sector is now being held to.
 6. Last year for instance, despite all its publicized challenges, civil aviation achieved a global accident rate of just 3.0 accidents per million departures, the second-lowest ever recorded.
 7. And while fatalities were up in 2014, mainly due to the very uncharacteristic losses of MH370 and MH17, the total number of fatal accidents also decreased to just seven – the fewest we've seen since 2008.
 8. Much of this success is due to increased cooperation and data sharing between ICAO, IATA, ACI and other organizations. And as we continue to get better at working together to identify and act on our common safety priorities, I am confident these numbers will only get better.
 9. One key example of this trend regards an area of significant importance to airport stakeholders – and I'm speaking now of runway safety.
 10. ICAO has been working since 2010 with ACI, IATA and ten other national, regional and international organizations to reduce runway incursions and excursions. Through our joint efforts, we have seen yearly runway accidents decrease by no-less-than 25 per cent as of 2014.

11. So while economic factors and considerations will form a very large proportion of the airport-related topics to be explored here over the next two days, and rightly so, let us also keep in mind the fundamental importance of keeping our operations safe, and the passengers and businesses we serve confident in our ability to get them from A to B.
12. At the same time, ICAO will be maintaining its focus on challenges that can impact the long-term sustainability of international airports.
13. Already we are implementing systems and procedures to deal with increased airspace and airport congestion that could impact the safe and efficient growth of air transport operations.
14. We are also making good progress with our government and industry partners in striking a balance between stringent security measures at airports, and speedier and more effective passenger and cargo procedures.
15. And we are continuing to develop innovative collaborative programmes and actions to counter the impact of greenhouse gas emissions on the environment, and to improve local air quality and reduce new noise in and around airports.
16. Finding and promoting effective solutions to these challenges is all about moving passengers, goods and mail through a minimum of transit points, in the shortest time, with optimum satisfaction and at the lowest cost.
17. This essentially summarizes the concept of ‘connectivity’ that has become so relevant to air transport economics in recent years.
18. It implies both that we are all partners – States, airlines, airports, air navigation service providers, and users – as well as that we share the responsibility for maintaining the healthy development of our industry.
19. In this mix of air transport stakeholders, airports play a unique and critical role as gateways to countries, cities and communities. Their strategic importance to the competitiveness of a wide range of industry sectors is undeniable, not to mention their influence on incoming foreign investment.
20. We must also acknowledge from a connectivity standpoint, particularly here in the Middle East, the important relationship between airport and air traffic management (ATM) capacity.
21. ATM coordination advances must move forward hand-in-hand with airport development to achieve optimum network expansion results, and ICAO’s guidance on the flexible use of civil-military airspace can also play an important role here.
22. I would add that ICAO is also continuing to progress its work on Air Traffic Flow Management (ATFM) and other Capacity/Efficiency priorities, and that these and other elements of our recently-revised *Global Air Navigation Plan* should be considered with respect to all related long-term planning – both at the State and Regional levels.
23. I noted earlier that air traffic volumes globally will double by 2030, but related projections point to a doubling of Middle East Regional traffic much sooner than this

– perhaps as early as 2020. This makes all of these issues urgent concerns for your Region's States.

24. From a user's perspective, airports are in one sense our 'first responders' with respect to what we all strive for in aviation – a seamless system of services for passengers and shippers.
25. In this context, the quality and availability of services at an airport often dictates whether there will be repeat business. Ease of use, friendliness, commercial activities, efficient customs and immigration, cargo handling, parking... Any one of these elements can make or break a passenger's air travel experience.
26. Over the years, in close cooperation with respective Member States and our close colleagues at ACI, ICAO has developed a number of strategies and policies to further enhance an airport's ability to meet the demands of a growing and competitive marketplace.
27. The first of these deals with the ownership and control structure of your facilities. Because of the growing requirement for significant investments to support new airport development and infrastructure, private interests are increasingly involved in financing such projects.
28. Commercialization, privatization and public-private partnerships furthermore make it easier to integrate proven business and management models to ensure that airports remain competitive with one another.
29. ICAO has produced policies that guide States and operators in setting up these arrangements, particularly as they relate to airport charges. A key provision is that States remain ultimately responsible for safety, security and economic oversight.
30. Another related issue is that of liberalization. ICAO, its Member States and industry have made substantial progress over the years in coming to grips with the myriad issues underlying the long term viability of airports, in addition of course to airlines and other operators.
31. These issues include market access, air carrier ownership and control, fair and equitable competition, rationalized consumer protection regimes and minimized taxes and levies.
32. As an important step in the process of liberalization, ICAO encourages all Middle Eastern States to sign and ratify the 2004 Damascus Convention. But we also recognize that emerging issues relating to protectionism and slot access are not exclusive to your region, but also where you fly to.
33. In every instance we must strive for global harmonization of approaches and greater liberalization to best assure end-user satisfaction.
34. Closely linked to the scope and pace of liberalization, and the third item I wish to raise with you today, are route development and the interconnectivity of city pairs.
35. Currently, the vast majority of arrangements concerning routes are locked into bilateral Air Services Agreements. The key is to remove those bilateral restrictions that limit the availability of services for the end-user.

36. Greater flexibility in these agreements increases demand and ensures that the services, which result in greater connectivity, are sustainable over the long-term for all stakeholders, including airports.
37. ICAO therefore supports that airports should be considered when bilateral and multilateral air services agreements are discussed, and one way to achieve this is for you to become involved in the next ICAO Air Services Negotiations or “ICAN” event, which in 2015 will be taking place in Antalya, Turkey, from 19 to 23 October.
38. Looking now to the Security and Facilitation domain, cyber security coordination and response is one of our more critical emerging issues, and an important one for today’s increasingly-automated airports.
39. ICAO is coordinating in this area with ACI, CANSO, IATA and the ICCAIA, based on an agreement we signed late in 2014. Our organizations will now be more proactive in sharing critical information such as threat identification, risk assessments and cyber security best practices.
40. We have also realized some productive Security and Facilitation advances in cooperation with the World Customs Organization, mainly with respect to cargo screening and clearance optimization at airports and other checkpoints in the air freight supply chain.
41. A last development I would raise with you on the Security and Facilitation front relates to the new Traveler Identification Programme which has evolved from our accomplishments in MRTD travel document modernization.
42. It establishes an integrated approach to the identification management process leading up to the issuance of travel documents and their inspection at borders, and a key segment of this work relates to automated border controls which can be a critical aspect of the airport experience.
43. Moving now to environmental matters, these have several implications where airports are concerned and ICAO is currently updating its related policy and guidance to help airports reduce their environmental impact.
44. This includes reviewing the principles supporting green airport planning, as well as best practices in land-use management.
45. We are also reviewing best practices and lessons learned in order to assist States and operators as they engage local communities regarding aircraft operations, noise, emissions and local air quality, in close coordination with ACI.
46. Since 2012, ICAO has had a focal point on the ACI Carbon Accreditation Board, providing technical advice and sharing its expertise on issues of environmental policy and programmes.
47. Ladies and gentlemen, this will likely be my last opportunity to address you as Secretary General of the International Civil Aviation Organization, and in closing today I wish to underline that it has been my great honour to serve ICAO, and the global air transport sector it supports, for so many years now.

48. During my time in aviation, the Middle East region has made tremendous progress in many areas. In recent years you have been the only ICAO world region experiencing double-digit passenger and freight traffic growth rates, and the 13.4 per cent passenger growth you enjoyed in 2014 was more than double that witnessed anywhere on the globe.
49. The commitment and achievements supporting the safe progress of this growth over the last few decades are truly to be commended, and it is my firm contention that further collaboration and consensus, through ICAO, will continue to be your best route forward.
50. I wish all of my dear friends and colleagues here in the Middle East only the greatest successes in your personal and professional lives in the years ahead, and trust that the presentations and discussions to follow here at the 2015 World Airport Forum will serve as productive and rewarding contributions to that goal.
