



EC-ICAO SYMPOSIUM ON REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
WELCOME ADDRESS
DR. TAÏEB CHÉRIF
ICAO SECRETARY GENERAL

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, welcome to this EC-ICAO Symposium on Regional Organizations. I am delighted that so many of you have taken the time to join us for what is expected to be an open and stimulating discussion on the impact of regional organizations on international civil aviation and of cooperation between regional organizations and ICAO.

I would also like to recognize the energy and enthusiasm that Mr. Daniel Calleja, the European Commission's Director for Air Transport, and his team have put into helping to organize and promote this event.

For ICAO, cooperation has always been of way of life. It is inherent to the mandate of the Organization and reflects our modus operandi. In fact, without cooperation at every level, air transport as we know it today would simply not exist. It would be inefficient at best and would certainly never have grown into a fundamental and essential component of our global society, economically, socially, culturally and even politically.

I thought I would initiate the conversation on regional cooperation with a brief reflection on the historical and legal foundation for what brings us all here today.

This naturally takes us back to 1944 and the signing of the Chicago Convention. Much of the world was still at war when the drafters of the Convention included in the preamble to the document the ideal of "cooperation between nations and peoples upon which the peace of the world depends".

As a corollary to this overarching principle, the first Session of the ICAO Assembly, held in Montreal in May 1947, adopted Resolution A1-10 on relations with public international organizations. The Assembly authorized the ICAO Council to make appropriate arrangements with public international organizations whose activities affect international civil aviation, particularly with regard to technical collaboration, exchange of information and documentation, attendance at meetings and such other matters. The Assembly adopted a similar resolution, A1-11, on relations with private international organizations.

In 1956, the 10th Assembly of ICAO Member States adopted Resolution A10-5 which translated this lofty goal into concrete action by establishing a policy framework to govern relations between ICAO and the then newly created European Civil Aviation Conference – ECAC.

The ECAC model proved effective and prompted the 18th Session of the Assembly in 1971 to extend the policy and arrangements to other regional civil aviation bodies. ICAO has since maintained a close and beneficial relationship with ECAC, the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), the Latin American Civil Aviation Commission (LACAC) and the Arab Civil Aviation Commissions (ACAC).

Another milestone worth noting for this meeting came in 1989 when the Assembly realized that the initial financial arrangements developed for ECAC would have to be modified, to take account changes in circumstances since their adoption, the growth and development of the regional bodies and to allow those bodies to assume full responsibility for their own financial affairs.

The importance of the Resolution lies in the fact that it reiterated the fundamental principles governing the relationship between ICAO and regional organizations, principles which apply to this day and which reflect the will of our now 190 Member States.

In short, the Assembly resolved that ICAO should support the work and activities of any existing or future regional civil aviation bodies wherever such support is requested by the regional body concerned and duly approved, taking into account the resources of ICAO and the implementation of its Work Programme.

Accordingly, the Assembly directed the Council of ICAO to act in three broad areas.

The first task was to conclude appropriate working arrangements with each regional civil aviation body and ensure a close working relationship. Second, to incorporate in such working arrangements a provision for cost sharing of common facilities and services to Member States. And third, to consider requests by regional bodies for assistance in air transport matters of regional interest.

Has this worked? Have the directives of the Assembly been followed and have they produced the desired result? The answer is unequivocally YES.

Let me give you a few examples.

For many years, ICAO supported the creation and subsequent operation of the African Civil Aviation Commission. On 1 January 2007, AFCAC became autonomous. It has grown in stature and has taken on a strategic role in the development of civil aviation throughout the continent. A defining responsibility makes it the executing agency for the Yamoussoukro Decision of 1999. Without the moral, financial and logistical support of ICAO, this would not have happened.

Much the same can be said of LACAC, the Latin American Civil Aviation Commission. ICAO helped establish and manage the Secretariat of the Commission as well as strategic and political direction. Today, LACAC is also an autonomous organization that plays a crucial role in the evolution of aviation in all of the States of Latin America. It is well respected and shares its expertise and experience in various venues around the world. Again, without ICAO, this would not have happened.

I spoke earlier of our involvement in the creation of ECAC and our involvement with the Arab Civil Aviation Commission follows a similar pattern of cooperation and support.

There is another dimension to our work which is vital to our collective success and that is the role of the seven ICAO Regional Offices which are accredited to our Member States. None of this would have happened without them either. In fact, the Council of ICAO has just initiated a study aimed at improving the effectiveness and reach of Regional Offices, so as to better meet the evolving needs of Member States.

Ladies and gentlemen, after more than half a century, it is clear that close cooperation between ICAO and Regional Organizations, as well as cooperation among regional bodies through the global forum that is ICAO, has furthered the universal aims and objectives of the Chicago Convention.

It has further facilitated the development of regional fora within which States can cooperate and coordinate on air transport issues of common concern. There is no doubt that the continued viability and operation of regional bodies serve, and will continue to serve, the interests of international civil aviation.

It is true that the world has changed dramatically since the birth of ICAO some 60 years ago. The familiar economic, social and geo-political signposts of the early years of civil aviation have given way to extraordinarily challenging times. Liberalization, climate change, terrorism and exploding fuel costs are but a few of the issues that we face day in and day out as we strive to ensure the overall sustainability of air transport for decades to come.

These are global challenges that require global solutions. They must be addressed collectively, in a resolutely harmonized manner.

There is no other option but to work together. There may be differences in approaches and circumstances, but they should always be implemented and addressed with the greater good in mind.

To sum up, ICAO was created as a global forum for the nations of the world to ensure the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation. Today, that world has shrunk to the point where we are all neighbours. More than ever, we need to work together to achieve our common objectives. Dynamic and wide-ranging regional cooperation, under the umbrella of ICAO, is our best guarantee of providing the citizens of the world with the global air transport system they expect and demand.

I wish you successful deliberations and a rewarding and productive meeting.
