



**Opening Address by the Secretary General  
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)  
Dr. Taïeb Chérif  
to the  
ICAO Workshop on Aviation and Alternative Fuels**

(Montréal, 10-12 February 2009)

Good morning Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to this first ICAO global Aviation and Alternative Fuels Workshop. We are truly delighted to see so many of you here.

The purpose of the workshop is twofold: to stimulate a dynamic exchange of views and to lay the ground work on a global roadmap for the effective and responsible contribution of alternative aviation fuels to protecting the environment. We have opened our doors to all stakeholders directly or indirectly associated with aviation alternative fuels and have designed our agenda to allow for free-flowing and transparent exchanges. We look forward to presentations and comments from the aviation industry, energy specialists and environmental experts who will enlighten us on the key issues and opportunities involved.

Aviation, as we know, is a relatively small contributor to worldwide greenhouse gas emissions but, given the anticipated growth of the industry in the coming decades, the need for action to reduce the use of fossil fuels has become a pressing issue. A variety of approaches, including alternative fuels and the specific challenges they pose, have to be seriously considered.

This new direction was endorsed by 36th Session of the ICAO Assembly in September 2007, as it recognized the urgent need for more concerted and effective action to reduce the carbon footprint of international aviation, the importance of research and development in fuel efficiency and alternative fuels, and the value of promoting understanding on the subject.

The genesis of alternative fuels for commercial aviation is worth noting. Interest was primarily sparked by rising fuel costs and energy supply security issues. Several States and regions felt it prudent to explore a possible shift to alternative fuels. Major initiatives and consortia that grew out of such intentions will be covered over the next three days. More recently, there has been a growing realization about the potential of alternative fuels in the development of balanced and robust strategies to mitigate the impact of aviation on the environment.

Alternative fuels on their own are not, and never will be, the solution. They should, however, be part of a comprehensive energy strategy. There are very few low-carbon energy options for reducing aviation emissions, and alternative fuels may be the only option for large-

scale use in the short term. Nevertheless, the decision to develop and use alternative fuels must be an informed and responsible one, taking into account total life-cycle costs and carbon footprints.

Concerning the current financial and economic crisis unfolding around the globe, it should not be seen as an obstacle to this way forward, but rather as an opportunity. Alternative fuels can play a decisive role in diversifying the global and national energy mixes, and it may help reduce price volatility in energy markets.

As is so often the case in international undertakings, global cooperation will be essential to ensuring the consistent and standardized use of alternative fuels. At the moment, the international aviation community has not yet achieved an integrated approach to alternative fuels. While regional and national consortia have done an excellent job of bringing together the expertise to consider technical issues, the subject has been addressed in a fragmented way. There is a critical need for more global coordination and ICAO is the recognized forum for that to happen. The Organization is as committed as ever to exercising its leadership for achieving effective coordination among all aviation stakeholders, be they States, industry or specialized agencies. It has in fact incorporated alternative fuels into the work programme of the Council's Committee on Environmental Protection, CAEP, at the request of the Council of ICAO and the Group on International Aviation and Climate Change created by the Assembly in 2007.

Over the years, we have maintained excellent relations with such bodies as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC, and of course the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – the UNFCCC. In the case of Alternative Fuels, we aim to form a close partnership with the International Energy Agency and the newly formed International Renewable Energy Agency.

Ladies and gentleman, the stage is set for a stimulating and productive workshop. So let us begin with the keynote address by Mr. Lewis Fulton, Senior Transport Energy Specialist of the International Energy Agency.

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