



**Address by the Secretary General of the  
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),  
Dr. Taïeb Chérif,  
to the 2009 China Civil Aviation Development Forum**

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*“Stable Development with a Safe, Open, and Green Operational Environment  
for the Global Aviation Industry”*

It is a great honour for me to address such a prestigious audience on the overall challenge facing air transport – ensuring sustainable growth in an extraordinarily demanding economic and operating context.

The very idea of growth seems strangely out of place as the world struggles with one of the worst recessions ever. Traffic is down in most markets and many airlines have disappeared or filed for bankruptcy, while most have had to curtail operations in the face of diminishing revenues and yields. The weakening demand for air travel has also had a formidable ripple effect on all stakeholders, from aircraft manufacturers to service providers, as well as the travel and tourism sector.

The air transport industry, however, has always been resilient. Following the anticipated recovery next year, our long-term prospect for China and the Asia Pacific Region is for overall passenger traffic within the region to grow at an average annual rate of 5.5 percent until the year 2025. This would mean almost 290 million passengers a year at that time.

China’s air traffic market is among the fastest growing in the world. The average annual rate of growth for passenger traffic has exceeded 15% over the last several years. China is the leading player in freight traffic. And China is moving fast in terms of capacity for air transportation, new airports, air navigation services and air traffic management infrastructure.

As China celebrates the 60th anniversary of its civil aviation, it can be proud of its accomplishments and confident in its future, a future that begins today, as it does for the rest of the world, by effective measures to improve the overall efficiency and sustainability of the air transport system.

For all of us, safety must remain the top priority. In 2008, there were 11 aircraft accidents worldwide involving passenger fatalities on scheduled air services worldwide, the same as in 2007, but with fewer fatalities. This is indeed remarkable given the more than 25 million scheduled flight operations annually.

This achievement is the result of commitment and cooperation on the part of all members of the aviation community. The ICAO Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) has been a great incentive for States and stakeholders alike to further improve the overall safety level of facilities and processes. USOAP is now ten years old and will be phased out next year. We must now anticipate the introduction of the Continuous Monitoring Approach – the CMA. This will require increased involvement from States for the collection of data and follow-up activities, but it will significantly enhance our collective ability to oversee and improve the level of safety, on a real-time basis.

A related approach to increasing aviation safety is to strengthen the regulatory framework in each Member State, so as to promote the full implementation and enforcement of ICAO standards, procedures and guidance material, as well as rapid resolution of safety issues as they arise. A culture of safety must permeate every element of air transport operations, within civil aviation administrations, airlines, airports and every other stakeholder concerned. We have been very encouraged by the development of State Safety Programmes and the success of initiatives like Safety Management in both government agencies and industry.

Yet we must do more. We must put special emphasis in such areas as the protection of safety data collection and processing systems. We must reduce runway incursions, one of our major obstacles to considerably improving overall safety. And we must surely address one of the greatest challenges we will face in the coming years, the lack of skilled personnel. In this regard, ICAO has developed a four point plan of action to assist Member States in maintaining high standards of training and will host a Symposium next year on the next generation of aviation professionals.

I am also pleased to announce a unique high-level safety conference to be held next year at ICAO. It will be an opportunity for a comprehensive view of safety challenges and the solutions we must envisage to resolve them. Our objective, as always, is to foster a climate of cooperation around the implementation of the Global Aviation Safety Plan and its myriad elements that, if pursued, can greatly enhance safety around the world. I strongly encourage everyone to attend and to contribute.

At the heart of these and other activities is the need to increase the efficiency of aircraft operations. One of the most recent initiatives is the early implementation of Performance-based Navigation. Performance-based Navigation, or PBN, involves a major shift from conventional ground-based navigation aids and procedures to satellite-based navigation aids and area navigation procedures. Performance-based Navigation is more accurate and makes it possible to establish clear performance requirements, leading to shorter, more direct routes between two given points, as well as more efficient take-offs and landings. This reduces fuel burn, airport and airspace congestion, and aircraft emissions of greenhouse gases. In short, PBN contributes to further improving the safety, efficiency and sustainability of the global air transport system.

The sooner we implement PBN, the sooner we will reap its enormous benefits. This was recognized by the 36th Session of the ICAO Assembly in 2007 when it urged all Member States of the Organization to have PBN implementation plans ready by 2009.

We have clearly outlined the PBN concept in the ICAO Performance-based Navigation Manual and a coordinated action plan to assist States in the implementation of PBN according to ICAO criteria is now available. All ICAO Regional Offices, including our office in Bangkok, have established PBN task forces with participation from States and a Global PBN Task Force, made up of States and industry partners, is addressing many of the issues associated with PBN implementation.

The Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) of the United States and the European SESAR future air navigation systems are both based on the application of PBN and support the

ICAO Global Air Navigation Plan to ensure global harmonization and standardization. But we must act quickly and decisively. We have therefore urged all ICAO Member States in this Region and around the world to move with diligence in their PBN implementation plans.

In this regard, I would like to congratulate and thank China for taking a leadership role in the application of the PBN concept in the Asia-Pacific Region. On 26 April, ICAO and China signed a letter of intent to establish a Flight Procedures Project, located in Beijing. The Region was chosen for the first FPP because of the tremendous growth in traffic here. One of the features is that it will help in the implementation of PBN. The formal signing will probably take place at the DGCA conference to be held in October and I encourage all States to join the programme.

Thus far, I have spoken of ways to address growth in a safe and efficient manner. We must also do so in an environmentally sustainable manner. There is increasing pressure for aviation to reduce its carbon footprint, to become greener. All of us in this room know the progress we have made over the past 30 years or so in increasing the energy efficiency of air transport operations. We also know that it is not enough because growth outpaces progress in this area.

The Group on International Aviation and Climate Change created by the 36th Session of the Assembly is formulating an aggressive plan of action to address the issue of greenhouse gas emissions and will table it at its fourth and final meeting in two weeks time. The Council of ICAO will review the report in June. It will then be the focus of a high-level meeting in October and the resulting conclusions and recommendations will form the basis for aviation's position at the Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC in Copenhagen, in December.

We have worked very hard with all States and industry in putting forth our common view that emissions from international aviation should continue to be managed through ICAO. This process has worked well in the past and can lead to more gains in the future. It is a tried and tested methodology that reflects the unique characteristics of the sector.

Having said all of this, our best guarantee of success in meeting all of challenges is to work together, in keeping with the very nature of international aviation. We must move ahead in a concerted and cooperative manner. For many States, this means collaboration through regional organizations and regional integration.

The wisdom of this strategy was outlined at a Symposium on Regional Organizations held one year ago at ICAO in Montreal. The Symposium concluded that regional organizations are a positive reality and that there is a trend towards more regional governance.

Regional organizations allow for the pooling of resources and the reduction of costs, a crucial factor now given the demanding conditions we are facing. Their advantages are most evident in the area of safety oversight, but can also be achieved in other areas, such as the provision of air navigation services, security or environmental policy.

Regional organizations also facilitate the process of liberalization by favouring the converging of existing rules, the development of common rules, or even the creation of a regional regulatory framework. Regional integration can provide more flexibility in dealing with issues such as ownership and control, a factor hampering the development of civil aviation on a global scale.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is no doubt that many challenges await us in the years ahead. This forum will touch upon many of them and I personally look forward to moderating the panel that will look at how best to ensure sustainable growth of the aviation industry.

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