



**FAREWELL PRESENTATION BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL
OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION (ICAO)
DR. TAÏEB CHÉRIF
TO THE COUNCIL OF ICAO**

(Friday, 3 July 2009)

Thank you Mr. President and Mr. Ma for these kind words. And thank you also Mr. President for the opportunity to share with you and Representatives on the Council a few thoughts concerning my six years as Secretary General of the Organization.

This is an emotional moment for me. The end of my mandate on 31 July will bring to a close one of the most demanding yet rewarding chapters in an aviation career that spans close to 40 years now.

Over the past few months, a good many friends and colleagues asked me to identify the one accomplishment I am most proud of. Before I answer this question, let me go back to when I was first appointed Secretary General. That was on 3 March 2003.

I had been Representative of Algeria on the Council since 1998 and I thought I knew ICAO well. True to my scientific background, however, I needed first hand insight into our strengths and weaknesses as an Organization. I therefore spent the interval between my appointment and my taking office on 1 August to undertake a diagnostic review of the work programme, the budget, the organizational structure and how well each of these components interconnected.

My objective was to prepare the groundwork for a logical, cohesive plan of attack to lead the Secretariat for the following three years – to meet the rapidly evolving technological, economic, social and legal challenges that were gathering on the horizon.

What I discovered pointed me in the right direction. For example,

- There was distinct disconnection among the five Bureaus, whereby each bureau operated almost independently, focussed on their own programmes and activities.
- There existed a lack of administrative and functional coordination. Each Bureau, for example, had its own IT operations, with distinct hardware and software programmes that in many cases were not compatible, and in some instances efforts and information were being duplicated.
- The Regional Offices were not well aligned with the processes, procedures and programmes within Headquarters.

Perhaps what surprised me the most was that we did not have a sharp sense of direction as to where we were heading. At the time, the ICAO Strategic Action Plan contained 21 strategic objectives, far too many. In truth, some of them were more tactics and programmes than Strategic Objectives.

I realized that we needed to bring more focus, more structure to significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization.

During my first mandate, we did just that. We put into place a wide range of measures to increase the efficiency and responsiveness of every aspect of our operations.

- We centralized the IT function and emphasized the widespread use of information technology for cost-effective production and delivery of documentation services. This, in turn, brought us closer to an environmentally-friendly and paperless organization. Our IT strategy also led to more streamlined work processes through the establishment of an IT Master Plan.
- We generated greater functional integration between Headquarters and the seven Regional Offices through such initiatives as project management and related software, to ensure better coordination and interaction between different parts of the Organization involved in the same project.
- We introduced substantive changes to the organizational structure and realigned our human resources practices with those of the UN Human Resources Management Framework.

We did this and much more through what I consider to be our crowning achievement – the first-ever ICAO Business Plan. The Business Plan became the cornerstone of the Organization's activities. Stemming from vision and mission statements and the six Strategic Objectives, the Business Plan identified the key activities necessary to meet the objectives, presented the consolidated actions, the allocation of resources and time-frames, and set key performance indicators (KPIs) against which results could be measured. In brief, the Business Plan established the framework and principles for a performance-based and results-oriented Organization.

Moreover, it induced an inter-connection and inter-dependency among the Bureaus which necessitated an enhanced collaboration in the implementation of key activities, the result of which we have seen in the successful implementation of high-priority programmes and projects, such as

- the Audit Results Review Board (ARRB);
- the coordination of aviation safety and security activities ensuring that safety measures under consideration do not create security problems and vice-versa;
- the creation and development of the Continuous Monitoring Approach (CMA);
- the coordinated approach to activities related to Environmental issues;
- the development of metrics to assess the progress/success in safety and efficiency strategic operational improvement; and
- the implementation of the Performance Based Navigation (PBN) Programme in Asia;

... these are only but a few examples.

And so, in answer to the question as to what accomplishment I am most proud of, it is definitely the fact that we have become a more united organization, 'delivering as one' to borrow from a statement by the current Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-Moon. Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of the Secretariat, we initiated and implemented a process to bring the Organization squarely into the 21st century. And we accomplished all of this during a very short span of time.

Having answered this question about the most satisfying accomplishment of my tenure at ICAO, I wish to answer another one, also often asked by friends and colleagues – what accomplishment has brought me the most joy, which is not quite the same as pride in a job well done.

This second question is easier to answer. On 27 February 2006, I was privileged to have been appointed for a second term as Secretary General and quickly forged ahead with consolidating what we had started during my first term, while implementing new measures to further improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of the Organization. A number of them stand out, such as

- developing further features of the Business Plan to incorporate Results-Based Management, Results-Based Budgeting and Performance Reporting.
- the modernization of the financial system, Agresso;
- positioning ICAO as one of the leading UN agencies in the implementation of IPSAS;
- the development and implementation of a new Performance Appraisal and Competency Enhancement (PACE) system.

I am particularly happy about the creation of the AFI Comprehensive Implementation Programme (ACIP) established in January 2008 to give effect to the AFI Plan.

In fact, the recent establishment of the Regional Safety Oversight Organization (RSOO) and the creation of a Regional Accident Investigation Agency for the Banjul Accord Group (BAG) member States is an important and noteworthy achievement. This accomplishment has established the basis from which other similar assistance may be provided, over a short period of time, to other COSCAPs and neighboring States in Africa, and thus enable the objectives of the AFI Plan and the ICAO safety targets for 2008 to 2011 to be met.

My biggest challenge by far, however, was coping with a successive zero nominal growth budget.

Some of you may recall my very first statement to the staff as Secretary General in 2003. At the time, I shared my strong belief in the human dimension of the Organization, the staff. I ensured that working conditions were as favorable as possible at all levels of the Organization. I insisted that all promotions would be based on competency. I promoted the hiring of more women in senior positions, including the Senior Management Group.

The real test came with the budget exercise which called for the elimination of 110 posts from the Regular Programme. I must confess that this period of time was the most trying of my entire career. There is nothing more difficult for the head of an organization than to tell someone that he or she no longer has a job. This responsibility brings one face to face with the realities of no longer being able to support a sick spouse, to make mortgage payments, to take care of children or plan a well-deserved retirement.

I had a few sleepless nights before we ultimately were able to protect all but a handful of positions through the Ancillary Revenue Generation Fund, another one of our successful initiatives, in spite of a few growing pains. Today, the RGA unit is a strong contributor to the bottom line of the Organization.

This, then, is what has brought me most joy. Having been able to create a mechanism that benefits the Organization while at the same time saved jobs for many hardworking and dedicated individuals.

As I look back over the past six years, I realize how much progress we have made. We gradually and systematically changed the way we do business. We are now poised to face future challenges in an assertive and proactive manner. We are, and will become, increasingly efficient and effective as a global Organization in responding to the needs of our 190 Member States and of the world aviation community.

As I prepare to take my leave, I wish to thank each and every one of you for contributing to the progress of the Organization in all of the areas I have singled out. We have had our differences of opinion over the years, but I am sure that our actions and words were rooted on doing what was best for ICAO, for Member States, and for the health of the global air transport system.

I also wish to commend all the staff of ICAO for their support and dedication over the years. They are passionate people for whom aviation runs in their veins and I will miss them very much.

In closing I would like to take this opportunity to convey my sincere and profound thanks to:

- my country, Algeria, which I had the honour and privilege to represent on the Council of ICAO for five years and which supported my candidature for the post of Secretary General in 2003 and 2006;
- the Government of Canada – for its steadfast support as Host to the Organization. ICAO is privileged to be located in these Headquarters premises and has greatly benefited from many services offered by the Canadian government.
- I thank the Government of Quebec - also for its support and contribution which assists ICAO in the performance of its activities.
- the City of Montréal – for excellent ongoing relations and provision of services which greatly facilitate our lives in this wonderful city.

Finally, Mr. President, a special thanks to the interpreters for their excellent work. Thank you for your patience and your competency. In fact, we do not appreciate enough the concentration efforts which they have to make because they have to stay alert, there are different languages spoken in this room, they go from one to the other.

Then last but not least, as we say, I would like to thank my assistant Anna for her remarkable work, for her commitment, her perseverance, her devotion and most particularly for her discretion. I would like to thank André, her colleague, I'd like to thank her for her work, her devotion, her kindness and together they make a formidable team that watches over the Secretariat.

I would like to thank my wife for all her support, for her encouragement and for sharing this adventure here with ICAO. I'd like to thank my two sons, Yacine and Sofiane who have come here to be present at this farewell. And in conclusion, in the style of the Representative of South Africa, merci beaucoup, muchas gracias, choukran, spassiba, xie xie, and Thank you Mr. President.