



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION (ICAO),
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TO THE 19TH PLENARY SESSION OF THE
AFRICAN CIVIL AVIATION COMMISSION (AFAC)**

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Good morning ladies and gentlemen. It is a great pleasure for me to take part in the 19th Plenary Session of the African Civil Aviation Commission. We are here today to deliberate, amongst other things, on specific actions that must be taken to significantly improve aviation safety and security in Africa, and how ICAO and the world aviation community can assist in that endeavour.

Ensuring such global support requires the acceptance of certain key principles and conditions.

One is the responsibility of Member States of ICAO to implement minimum operating standards, procedures and practices outlined in the Chicago Convention and its Annexes, Assembly Resolutions and other prescriptive documents. There is also the obligation to collaborate in the standardization and harmonization of these requirements regionally and worldwide. And there is the need for States to establish and implement a national system that enables them to satisfactorily discharge their international obligations and responsibilities to develop and conduct civil aviation in a safe, secure and orderly manner.

For action to be effective, there must also be a thorough understanding and recognition of the nature and scope of the problem. Over the past few years, there have been numerous acknowledgments within the African aviation community on the need to improve safety and bring the accident rate in line with the world average. In the area of security, the Declaration of the Third African Union Conference of Ministers Responsible for Air transport held in Addis Ababa last May is a tacit acknowledgment of serious shortcomings in national and regional security systems. In both areas, safety and security, audits conducted by ICAO in African States have clearly demonstrated significant shortcomings in the implementation of standards and procedures.

Third, there must be a clear understanding of the enormous consequences of not complying with globally accepted principles and arrangements relating to international civil aviation. A safe and secure air transport system can be a catalyst for the economic growth of nations and regions. Conversely, an air transport system that is not perceived to be safe and secure by other countries can effectively bar entry into lucrative global markets and stunt economic growth. This has been the case with Africa last year when the European Community placed a number of carriers on a blacklist. A similar step was taken by the EU with Indonesian carriers just last month.

Against this backdrop, I would like to take a few minutes to outline some of the initiatives and programmes available through ICAO and its partners to African States that require assistance in meeting their technical, operational and regulatory obligations under the Chicago Convention. I trust that the information will provide food for thought as you discuss a number of subjects of mutual interest to our two organizations and I look forward to the results of your deliberations.

The first item I want to mention is the new Implementation Support and Development Branch created on 15 June. The primary objectives of the ISD are to:

- support Contracting States that have been identified by the ICAO audit programmes as having significant deficiencies in the implementation of their aviation safety and security obligations
- facilitate and coordinate the provision of assistance provided by States, industry, international financial institutions and other stakeholders;
- participate in safety and security implementation support and development activities aimed at enhancing the capabilities of States to meet their aviation safety and security obligations.

The ISD is based on the observation that problems identified through safety and security audits alike are fundamentally the same, namely a lack of proper legislation, regulations, infrastructure, and the ability to retain qualified personnel. It will build on, better coordinate and expand on support already available from long-standing ICAO programmes. For example, it will continue to provide technical and strategic support to technical cooperation projects relating to safety and security improvements, including regional and sub-regional efforts such as COSCAPs and CASPs. It will also continue security training activities offered previously by the Coordinated and Assistance Programme and extend the concept to safety. Finally, the ISD will serve as the depository of essential aviation safety and security related information to facilitate the establishment and maintenance of robust and sustainable aviation safety and security systems.

Let me now turn to specific strategies relating to both safety and security in Africa.

As regards safety, I am very happy to outline a major initiative endorsed by the Council of ICAO on 30 May. It is a Comprehensive Regional Implementation Plan for Aviation Safety in Africa aimed at sustained air safety improvements on the African continent. The Plan was developed following a visit to Africa last year by members of the Air Navigation Commission of ICAO. The Commission recommended a revitalization of the Organization's presence in Africa, in an effort with all stakeholders, to reduce the accident rate and increase the overall level of safety. Accordingly, and with the assistance and guidance of government and industry groups concerned, the ICAO Secretariat developed what we now refer to as the AFI Plan.

As its name implies, it is based on a holistic approach to dealing with the set of complex economic and political issues at play in the AFI Region. The Plan reflects ICAO's overall strategy contained in the performance-based Global Aviation Safety Plan, which focuses on activities with the highest return for improving safety. It implies greater coordination of ICAO safety-related programmes and projects with those of national and regional organizations in Africa, as well as international bodies concerned. It will also respond to specific recommendations to findings and conclusions of studies carried out by civil aviation authorities and industry representatives into safety levels in Africa.

The plan will draw on expertise available in ICAO Headquarters and Regional Offices in Africa, AFI Planning and Implementation Regional Group (APIRG), regional and sub-regional safety oversight systems, other Contracting States, ICAO partners such as the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA), the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations (IFATCA) and other stakeholders, including international funding agencies such as the World Bank. The Plan will also be integrated with ongoing Cooperative Development of Operational Safety and Continuing Airworthiness Programme (COSCAP) and Unified Strategy Programme (USP) activities.

Under ICAO's leadership, the plan for Africa calls for collaboration between regulatory agencies and industry in the implementation of initiatives aimed at rectifying safety deficiencies. Development and implementation of the plan will follow the methodology and process contained in the Global Aviation Safety Roadmap.

From a political point of view, the plan will be implemented in close coordination with, and with support from, AFCAC, APIRG and the African Union and other regional bodies such as the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC).

The initial implementation phase of the plan is expected to cover a period of four years. A decision on the continuation of the plan will be made by the Council after the three-year progress assessment. The execution of the Comprehensive Regional Implementation Plan for Aviation Safety in Africa falls within the general mandate of the Dakar and Nairobi Regional Offices. The Air Navigation Commission, through the Secretariat, will be monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Plan every six months and report to the Council on the results achieved at every autumn session.

To review the Plan with all parties concerned and to discuss safety-related issues in general, the Council of ICAO will convene a one-day, high-level meeting to coincide with the 36th session of the ICAO Assembly. The special meeting will take place at ICAO headquarters on Monday, 17 September. The goal of the meeting is to obtain firm political commitment from States in the AFI Region to implement the Plan and achieve tangible expressions of support and cooperation from States, industry and other major players. The meeting will develop a draft Assembly resolution calling for additional resources to implement the Plan. A declaration is being prepared for all participants to sign, formalizing their commitment to the Plan of action.

Such a declaration for security already exists, as I mentioned earlier. It was signed at the meeting of Ministers responsible for Transport in May. Declarations, however, are only worthwhile if they are backed by actions taken for their systematic and timely implementation.

I take this opportunity to suggest that such a plan of action should be the focus of the Aviation Security Conference for Africa to be held in Addis Ababa this coming November. As the meeting is already planned to build on the Declaration on Aviation Security in Africa, it would be most appropriate to reinforce your commitment with specific measures that will convince the world aviation community of your determination to address head on your security challenge and significantly improve the integrity of your systems.

In this way, by year end, you could have powerful declarations and solid actions plans designed to successfully and permanently remedy the safety and security deficiencies of African air transport systems within a prescribed time frame.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my presentation, ICAO and the world aviation community stands by ready to help. The structures are there. Assistance is there from the ICAO Technical Co-operation Programme, which not used enough in Africa, and other financial aid from various donor sources. What is needed now is action. There must be a commitment to implement corrective measures. That is the sine qua non condition for the aviation community to help Africa raise the level of safety and security to world levels. The bottom line is that it is up to Africa. If you commit to action and carry it out, the rest of the world will follow.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish all participants a most productive Plenary Session.