

**Welcome Speech of Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum
President of Dubai Civil Aviation Department
at the ICAO Global Symposium on 18 September, 2006**

Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi – Minister of Economy, UAE,
Mr. Mohammed El Amiri, Director, Air Transport Division of ICAO,
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning!

We extend a very warm welcome to you all.

It is our great pleasure to address this international gathering assembled here, to deliberate on air transport liberalization issues. Given the importance of this theme, I am glad to host the event and indeed thankful to ICAO for selecting Dubai as the venue for the Symposium, giving us an opportunity to display our hospitality.

Air transport liberalization is not new to Dubai and UAE. Let me briefly trace the Aviation history of Dubai in particular.

In 1937, Imperial Airways flew a route to Australia via the Gulf, using flying boats, which needed a stopover in the Gulf. They selected Dubai as a landing spot because of its creek. The then Ruler, Sheikh Saeed Al Maktoum, having seen the potential for increased air activity, permitted the installation of fuelling facilities in Dubai for aircraft to land and use these facilities.

In 1960, Dubai airport opened giving landing rights to any civil aircraft which requested permission – “of course without any restrictions!” This was a period when most other countries were using restrictive bilateral arrangements in regulating international air transport.

Development of Dubai International Airport, from a mere creek side landing spot to a globally renowned aviation hub, is a profound testimony to the success of the sound and pragmatic aviation policy we have adopted. It is significant that we have taken the lead and are one of the first aviation authorities to open their skies and to benefit from a liberalized aviation policy.

We have a short aviation history but with a far-sighted future leading to massive development in the aviation sector. Our success is no secret. The rise of Dubai city as an economic hub, Dubai International Airport as an aviation hub and Emirates Airlines as a world class airline – all came about in concert. This is part of a bigger picture of Dubai.

I strongly believe that liberalization, whether air transport, trade or financial, is an effective and viable option for a developing country. My colleague Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi, perhaps, will elaborate more on this issue.

UAE has been pursuing ‘Open Skies Agreements’ with like-minded countries. Where Open Skies Agreements are not considered acceptable by our partners, we seek the most liberal agreement possible.

Experience shows that countries with restrictive approaches to market access by other national and foreign carriers have been less capable of attracting foreign investments and developing their aviation Industry.

It is rather unfortunate that such States do not see the benefits of a liberalized policy in a global market. States should realize that our industry is crucial to the development of economy and to the development of people's wealth and their well being.

Here, in Dubai, we have ambitious plans for the future and we strive to ensure that all of them become a reality. What you see around you, is ample proof of that.

Looking at the future trends, airlines based in UAE have a purchase order book of over US 55 Billion Dollars, of which Emirates Airlines alone accounts for 30 Billion Dollars. Dubai is investing 8.1 Billion Dollars in Jebel Ali Airport City Complex covering 140 sq. kms. and 4.1 Billion Dollars is being invested in the expansion of the present airport which is underway at the moment.

Total investment on UAE airports is 20 Billion Dollars.

In addition, with the blessings of HH. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai, we have recently unveiled a 15 Billion Dollar Dubai Aerospace Enterprise, which will include aircraft manufacturing, maintenance of aircrafts at other airports, leasing of aircraft as well as the setting up of an aviation university among other sectors.

We consider this as a good opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to the aviation sector as a catalyst in enhancing the economy and it signals our clear intention to become one of the driving forces of global economy.

The Department of Civil Aviation, Dubai has always been in the forefront, organizing and hosting a wide variety of meetings, conferences, symposiums and exhibitions relating to aviation. But this is the very first time that ICAO is holding a Global Symposium in Dubai and it is a privilege for us to host this event. As this is held in conjunction with the 'Routes Conference', you will witness the biggest gathering of aviators under one roof here in Dubai.

I am confident that ICAO will give us more opportunities to hold such events in future. We will be too glad to host them here.

I wish you all a successful Symposium!

Thank You!