

**SECOND HIGH-LEVEL SAFETY CONFERENCE 2015 (HLSC 2015)  
PLANNING FOR GLOBAL AVIATION SAFETY IMPROVEMENT**

**Montréal, 2 to 5 February 2015**

**OPENING ADDRESS**

**BY**

**Michael Huerta on behalf of the United States Government**

Good day, Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, fellow delegates, and distinguished guests. It is an honor for me to address this international gathering, and to discuss the progress made in the safety arena since the last High-Level Safety Conference in 2010.

Aviation continues to grow around the globe, and we are fortunate to have an unprecedented level of safety. Global accident rates continue to decrease, and flying has never been safer. This is a testament to the work of ICAO and its Member States in making safety a number one priority. Countries here today have adopted strong safety cultures that enhance our incredibly safe system. This is due, in large part, to ICAO's important work.

In the past, our approach to safety was to study the causes of accidents after they occurred. This helped us to continuously improve safety. But we all know that our ultimate goal is to prevent accidents from happening at all. The new way of doing business is to use safety data to identify hazards, and modify our operations to prevent incidents before they happen. An example of how we can proactively use safety information is the data sharing agreement between the United States and ICAO that was just signed last week. This agreement is a great step forward.

While our current system is extremely safe, global aviation has also recently endured tragic events. These incidents transcended borders and affected us all as a global community. These events serve as reminders that more work needs to be done to keep aviation safe.

This second High-Level Safety Conference brings us together at a pivotal time when we can directly impact the future of aviation for the next several decades. During this conference, we will discuss ways to prevent accidents from occurring even before an aircraft begins its departure. This will be done in large part with more effective and integrated safety management systems. This solid foundation will assist States in maintaining a safe aviation system.

Once a flight departs, the challenge remains to monitor the aircraft to respond to any abnormalities. These integrated safety systems must be in place to learn from incidents, and to prevent similar events from recurring.

We also face the challenge of working together to share information about areas of conflict that can impact civil aviation with catastrophic consequences.

The challenges of enhancing safety even further are much bigger than one country or region. It is essential that we work through ICAO, and its regional offices and partners, to effectively and efficiently improve aviation safety.

Thank you for your kind invitation to speak. It is again with great pride and anticipation that I am here. On behalf of the United States, I wish this conference much success.