



**Opening address by the President of the ICAO Council,
Dr. Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu,
to the Second ICAO
High-level Safety Conference (HLSC)**

(ICAO HQ, Montréal, Canada – 2 February 2015)

Good morning everyone,

The original intent of this year's High-level Safety Conference was to focus our sector's attention on future approaches needed to manage aviation safety – in particular safety information sharing and protection.

But given that we support a very dynamic sector, serving an increasingly dynamic world, we will be spending a large part of our time over the coming days on a number of important emerging issues which arose last year.

As we will all readily admit, 2014 was a challenging year for aviation safety. On the one hand total accidents were down roughly 7 per cent, with only 2.7 occurring for every million flights. Yet at the same time fatalities were up due to several high-profile accident events which continue to command our attention.

The unprecedented loss of MH370 was the first of these, focusing intense scrutiny on the ability of our network to better track our aircraft on a truly real-time, global basis. And while this capability may not prevent accidents from occurring, technologies do currently exist, and are in operational use, to track aircraft positions when operating outside of radar coverage.

Given that global flight tracking can provide valuable information that can be used to manage safety contingencies and, when necessary, support search and rescue efforts, it must be a priority for us.

Secondly, we encountered the tragic loss of flight MH17 – an event which has highlighted that safety vulnerabilities in our system can be caused not only by internal, but also by external risks. As with MH370, our community responded rapidly to this incident and convened a special Task Force to review the very complex challenges the MH17 event has brought to light. I am sure you are as eager as I to begin determining practical solutions from its conclusions.

Thirdly, and most recently, the circumstances of the loss of the Air Asia flight have also reinforced expectations for flight tracking, not to mention placing renewed focus on downed aircraft locator solutions – such as deployable flight recorders.

We must also acknowledge that new aircraft and air navigation technologies are opening up exciting frontiers today which we need to integrate safely into the existing civil aviation operational framework. This includes the proliferation of remotely-piloted aircraft systems and the burgeoning area of sub-orbital flights, topics which will be dealt with at length in back-to-back symposiums we are convening here at the end of next month.

Fortunately, civil aviation as a sector has a long history of meeting and resolving even the most difficult of challenges. The extraordinary qualities and benefits of modern air services, including our global network's overall safety performance, are the direct result of the commitment of our Member States, industry and international organizations to work together, and through ICAO as we are again today.

Our work at this event must therefore seek to respect and maintain a strategic approach to aviation safety. We must deliver recommendations which will progressively achieve agreed-upon safety targets, but we must also continue to avoid any unintended consequences which could introduce new risks into what remains the safest mode of global transportation.

Any near-term responses we consider here must therefore be fully consistent with our long-term and consensus-driven safety objectives. And the best way to ensure this is by working within the framework set out in ICAO's Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP).

Importantly, the Global Plan helps to assure the needed consistency and continuity of our safety-related work by stressing the importance of:

- the information needed to identify emerging safety trends and risks;
- the international requirements that effectively address such risks, as well as the necessary human and technical resources to ensure their implementation; and
- the principles which formalize a collaborative approach, inclusive of our Member States, industry and partner organizations.

Coordinating and supporting the regional implementation of the GASP has been entrusted to the Regional Aviation Safety Groups (RASGs), which have been established by the Council in all regions. ICAO supports States through the RASGs in collaboration with international and regional organizations and industry.

RASG Chairpersons, like their Planning and Implementation Regional Group (PIRG) counterparts, serve as Champions of regional implementation. They'll be reporting on this progress for the first time during today's programme.

This coordination helps to illustrate that aviation, like the world it serves, is much more interdependent and interconnected today than it has ever been. Every State and Region knows that the global network can work to the benefit of all, but only when every player in our network cooperates on the basis of globally-harmonized and globally-enforced provisions.

This highlights, for ICAO particularly, that we will need to be more effective in how we communicate with and assist our States in both the near- and longer-term. For as our network continues to expand, so too will our exposure to safety risks unless we take measures now to proactively address emerging issues.

This brings me to another priority which is perhaps not fully addressed in the agenda of the conference. There is no doubt that ICAO has done well with respect to our safety rule-making activities, oversight auditing, targeted cooperative programmes and strategic safety management planning. The greater challenge which now lies ahead is to resolve the concerning level of variance in State-by-State implementation of ICAO SARPs.

More specifically, we must do more to level the playing field with respect to the local capabilities and capacities each State and Region has at its disposal to ensure truly effective SARP implementation.

From 2015 onward I am working to ensure that this will be a fundamental and organization-wide priority for ICAO. And in order to meet it head-on, we are now adjusting our planning and related work programmes to ensure that we leave No Country Left Behind where ICAO assistance and State implementation capacities are concerned.

And we will also be increasingly more transparent in publicizing related priorities, targets and achievements relating to SARP implementation. This will be accomplished through a global communications campaign designed to complement the Regional online dashboards we established last year to lead this effort.

But I must stress to you all that for the *No Country Left Behind* programme to be a true and global success, it will also require the buy-in and support of each and every one of you. It is my strong view that this must be our most fundamental priority, especially if we hope to ensure that all ICAO Member States can eventually realize the full and significant benefits that safe and reliable air services deliver.

Ladies and gentlemen, this second High-level Safety Conference could not have come at a better time. You have much to consider over the coming days, and much to achieve, and I wish you all a very productive conference.

Thank you.