



**Opening address by the President of the Council of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González,
to the High-level Conference on Aviation Security**

(Montréal, 12 September 2012)

Ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour to welcome you to the 2012 ICAO High-level Conference on Aviation Security. Thank you for committing your valuable time to help assure the success of this important event.

I would like to extend my special thanks to The Honourable Denis Lebel, Canada's Minister of Transport and representative of ICAO's host State, for his cogent opening remarks and warm welcome.

This is ICAO's first High-level Conference on Aviation Security since February 2002. At that time, significant actions were required to enhance aviation security and restore public confidence in air travel following the extraordinary events of 9/11.

That historic conference recognized the need for the international community to be more united on aviation security priorities. It also reinforced our understanding that success in addressing these priorities required more systematic collaboration and coordination on behalf of all States and stakeholders.

In light of these concerns, a global strategy was developed and adopted through ICAO, and I am pleased to acknowledge that the course which was set has served us very well in the intervening years. This success is a tribute to everyone in this room today as well as many others who could not be in attendance.

The result of this improved collaboration and data sharing is that civil aviation is more secure and our skies far safer today, thanks in large part to your focus on emerging as well as existing threats, and the specific initiatives which you have all helped to establish to support the more secure aviation system we enjoy today.

And yet, while progress has been clearly evident, we must also acknowledge that civil aviation continues to be an attractive target for terrorists. This comes as no surprise given air transport's essential and high-profile role in facilitating economic and social development worldwide.

Attacks on today's larger, modern aircraft, despite the fact that they may be filled with hundreds of innocent passengers, will continue to attract and focus global media attention in their aftermath. This means that the challenges before us will continue to demand unwavering and proactive leadership and diligence on behalf of aviation's security specialists – strengths which I recognize are very well represented in everyone in attendance here today.

As we look further ahead, safeguarding international civil aviation remains a high priority on many levels. This is largely owing to the fact that:

- Security threats have become much more complex;
- Vulnerabilities in the global aviation system have not been fully addressed; and
- Significant Security Concerns and other deficiencies, as identified through the ICAO Universal Security Audit Programme, have not been fully resolved.

In the economic context, we must also keep in mind that demand for air transport services continues to grow. This growth will come even as separate forecasts point to the need for much closer scrutiny on the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the security solutions we propose.

Most importantly, the outlook for aviation security over the coming years clearly illustrates that we must cooperate as never before, and to better effect. Security threats today transcend national boundaries. Whether we are considering the deployment of new technologies and processes, the mutual recognition of security measures, the tracking of international criminals or the improved sharing of information, more effective coordination remains essential to our success.

This, as you know, was the overriding message of the Declaration on Aviation Security, adopted by the 37th Session of the ICAO Assembly in 2010. We must continue to respect this clear mandate from ICAO's Member States over the course of this conference if we wish to effectively build on the progress seen over the last decade.

As we look ahead, therefore, to the 38th Session of the ICAO Assembly next year, it is critical that we be united and decisive on the best way forward.

Fortunately, we are well placed to do this, in large part because the momentum surrounding this High-level event has been building since early 2011, when ICAO initiated a series of Regional Aviation Security Conferences so that everyone's concerns could be clearly understood.

States, international organizations and industry partners participating in these regional conferences agreed on concrete actions to collectively and individually strengthen aviation security in accordance with the ICAO Assembly Declaration. This has been instrumental in paving the way for global consensus on the priorities and actions ahead of us.

I would like to take this opportunity to express ICAO's gratitude to the host States of the regional conferences. Their initiative and commitment will significantly assist us in the tasks now before us. Given their important contributions to this process, we will be hearing the key outcomes from each immediately following my address.

To ensure that our deliberations here are as constructive as possible, key issues and related strategies have been included in the proposals that you will consider. In many cases, these reflect the consensus achieved by subject-matter expert groups such as the Aviation Security Panel and its supporting bodies.

One such example is the proposed Risk Context Statement which responds to an Assembly Resolution calling for the development of a suitable risk assessment methodology for aviation security.

Important momentum was also gained recently when the ICAO Aviation Security Panel agreed on a mature proposal to address the threat posed by insiders. As this has been the subject of considerable debate in recent years, the new consensus reached through ICAO is a very welcome development. We thank the Panel members for resolving the issue by agreeing on a common and consistent approach to dealing with this threat.

In the area of travel document security, the Technical Advisory Group on Machine Readable Travel Documents has recognized that effective border control requires complementary strengthening of supporting identity establishment and management processes. You will be invited to consider how ICAO should position itself to provide further assistance in this regard.

In addition, the Beijing Convention and Beijing Protocol of 2010 reinforced the legal framework for international cooperation in the fight against terrorism and other acts of unlawful interference. The 37th Session of the ICAO Assembly has called upon States to ratify these two treaties as soon as possible and it is ICAO's hope that this conference will draw further attention to prioritizing those efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen, this conference has an ambitious agenda.

To enhance the framework for aviation security, you must carefully consider several new strategies being put forward. In addition to policies addressing threat mitigation, you will also need to review the evolving security audit process and ICAO's security-related assistance and capacity-building initiatives.

Another subject of prime concern for many States is the sustainability of security measures. This requires your careful attention, as do additional issues relating to innovation in security technology.

And, of course, given the ongoing nature of the threat to the air cargo system, endorsement of a comprehensive framework for air cargo and supply chain security is critical to our success over the coming days. The Joint Conference on Enhancing Air Cargo Security and Facilitation held jointly by ICAO, the World Customs Organization and the Government of Singapore this past July has provided us with valuable input on how to achieve enhanced cargo security and improve facilitation at the same time.

ICAO's role in these areas, as always, is to provide a forum where we can agree on effective and harmonized aviation security measures and coordinated global initiatives.

A common message from the advance regional conferences was that we must also continue to reinforce the scope and substance of the cooperation that presently exists among the world's aviation security stakeholders. We intend to do just that.

This High-level Conference on Aviation Security presents an opportunity to renew, in no uncertain terms, our shared commitment to comprehensively address global aviation security issues over the coming three to five years.

Despite the many topics before you, I am confident of a successful outcome. When it comes to matters of security, there is simply no other option. Too much is at stake.

Though it may be unavoidable that crises will, at times, drive our agenda, we have the opportunity in its absence to set a course that builds on our experience, draws us to consensus and achieves further concrete, measurable results.

I wish you every success in your discussions.