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CLEAR, PROACTIVE AND TARGETED STRATEGY TO MANAGE SUSTAINED GROWTH IN TRAFFIC

MONTRÉAL, 17 February 2011 – The annual number of passengers worldwide will increase from 2.5 billion to 5 billion over the next 20 years and the number of flights from 26 million to 50 million, Raymond Benjamin, Secretary General of ICAO told a luncheon hosted by the French Chamber of Commerce in Canada today.

The major challenge for the air transport sector will be to manage this sustained growth and, at the same time, improve the safety, security and sustainability of civil aviation.

“Our strategy is clear, proactive and targeted,” said Mr. Benjamin before a gathering of leaders of the Franco-Canadian business community.

Through its Global Air Navigation Plan, ICAO will facilitate the harmonization of a variety of large scale regional programmes to be implemented by States in the next 10 years to upgrade their national aeronautical infrastructures.

To reduce the number of accidents occurring during take-off and landing at airports, today’s leading cause of serious accidents, the United Nations agency has adopted a multi-disciplinary approach involving the relevant government entities and industries.

Special efforts will also be undertaken to promote closer cooperation between civil and military aviation authorities, which will lead to more efficient use of airspace for the benefit of all users.

As concerns security, “Our ultimate goal is to ensure that the wait times at checkpoints are as short as possible and that the measures deployed are unnoticeable to passengers, while providing the highest level of protection,” the Secretary General explained.

This will require proactive measures including the application of improved technologies for the detection of prohibited items, the further strengthening of international standards, more effective sharing of security information, the continuation of the mandatory audits by ICAO, and assistance to States that lack the expertise or resources to develop their aviation security systems.

Finally, although aviation accounts for a very small proportion of global greenhouse gas emissions from human activity, Mr. Benjamin presented a bold strategy for the aviation sector. “What matters most is that we stick to our targets of zero emissions growth as of 2020 and a 2 per cent annual fuel efficiency improvement up to the year 2050, on the basis of a global approach that takes into account technological progress, operational improvements, market-based measures and sustainable alternative fuels for aviation,” Mr. Benjamin concluded.

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A specialized agency of the United Nations, ICAO was created in 1944 to promote the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation throughout the world. It sets standards and regulations necessary for aviation safety, security, efficiency and regularity, as well as for aviation environmental protection. The Organization serves as the forum for cooperation in all fields of civil aviation among its 190 Contracting States.