



Safer Skies initiative integral to preventing shooting down of civilian aircraft

For immediate release

Montréal and The Hague, 9 June 2023 – Canada’s *Safer Skies* initiative is crucial to avoiding repeats of the shooting down of civilian aircraft, ICAO Council President Salvatore Sciacchitano advised delegates at a recent forum on the topic, but States must ramp up the political momentum around implementation and exchange of expertise.

The Third Safer Skies Forum was convened by the Governments of Canada and the Netherlands in support of progress “towards preventative conflict zone risk management practices,” and took place in Rotterdam and the Hague on 5 and 6 June.

It was attended by ministers, diplomats, and other delegates, who represented Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Kenya, Morocco, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, and the United States. Operators and labour were also represented through the attendance of the Civil Air Navigation Services Organization (CANSO), the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the International Federation of Airline Pilots’ Associations (IFALPA), and the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers’ Associations (IFATCA).

Expressing ICAO’s gratitude to Canada and the Netherlands for the organization and hosting of the event, Mr. Sciacchitano remarked that “at this event we have an exceptional and crucially important opportunity to ramp up the political momentum and enhance exchanges of technical expertise fostering the global cooperation that will underpin the implementation of the Safer Skies initiative.”

He highlighted that “the downing of an aircraft with innocent passengers and crew on board is absolutely unacceptable, the result of ineffective civil-military coordination, limited exchange of information, including a lack of intelligence information, and ultimately human error.”

The President also focussed on the high importance ICAO places on addressing the risks that conflict zones pose to civil aviation, which must be assessed by both States and operators, and expressed the organization’s “full and unwavering” support for their activities in this area.

Canada’s *Safer Skies* initiative was launched as a direct response to the shooting down of Ukraine International Airlines flight PS 752, bound for Kyiv on 8 January 2020 shortly after take-off from Tehran, which resulted in the loss of 176 lives.

The initiative has been welcomed and appreciated by the ICAO Council and subsequently endorsed by the ICAO Assembly.

“Commitment is of course key to the prevention of a similar event from ever happening again,” Mr. Sciacchitano declared, noting that “the shooting down of flight PS 752 was very regrettably not the first or only instance of its kind.”

The President recalled that Korean Airlines flight 007, with 269 passengers and crew on board, was shot down on 31 August 1983 by a military aircraft of the former Soviet Union. He noted that in the aftermath of this event, the ICAO Assembly amended the 1944 Chicago Convention to provide that every State must refrain from the use of weapons against civil aircraft in flight, but that

“notwithstanding this almost forty-year-old commitment by States, we continue to see instances involving the use of weapons against civil aircraft in flight.”

ICAO’s guidance to States and operators has evolved continuously following the recommendations of States following their investigations into the series of events that have occurred.

The Dutch Safety Board’s Final Report into the shooting down of MH 17 contained a number of safety recommendations. One of the most tangible outcomes of these is the production of the [Risk Assessment Manual for Civil Aircraft Operations Over or Near Conflict Zones \(Doc 10084\)](#), which was developed by ICAO with the pivotal support and contribution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Similarly, several safety recommendations addressed to ICAO were contained in the Final Report prepared by the Civil Aviation Organization of Iran into the loss of flight PS 752, which was published in March 2021. Those related to risk assessment and issuance of NOTAMs for flights in conflict zones, prioritization of States having potentially hazardous military activities for safety and security audit activities, and enhancement of the available guidance material, and were all addressed by ICAO.

In addition to these recommendations, other States affected by these tragedies have made proposals for enhancing international civil aviation safety and security.

Following these proposals, the ICAO Accident Investigation Panel has been working on concerns expressed about investigations on the downing of aircraft, particularly when the independence of the Accident Investigation Authority and credibility of the investigation could be challenged.

Most recently, the 41st Session of the ICAO Assembly, which took place in September and October 2022, also resulted in States requesting a prioritized review of the Risk Assessment Manual.

To this end, ICAO solicited feedback from Member States, and several substantive inputs from States and Industry Organizations have been received. These are under review and analysis, in close coordination with the *Safer Skies* Committee.

ICAO plans to issue a third edition of the Risk Assessment Manual taking into account these contributions by the end of this year, along with a programme to develop and roll-out a dedicated workshop.

“Flight safety has reached outstanding levels in recent decades. However, one single accident is one too many,” Mr Sciacchitano noted.



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About ICAO

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is a United Nations agency which helps 193 countries to cooperate together and share their skies to their mutual benefit.

Since it was established in 1944, ICAO's support and coordination has helped countries to diplomatically and technically realize a uniquely rapid and dependable network of global air mobility, connecting families, cultures, and businesses all over the world, and promoting sustainable growth and socio-economic prosperity wherever aircraft fly.

As it enters a new era of digitization, and of incredible new flight and propulsion innovations, air transport is relying more than ever on ICAO's expert support and technical and diplomatic guidance to help chart a new and exciting future for international flight. ICAO is innovating itself to answer this call, and expanding its partnerships among UN and technical stakeholders to deliver a strategic global vision and effective, sustainable solutions.

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