

**Opening remarks by the Secretary General
International Civil Aviation Organization
Mr. Renato Cláudio Costa Pereira
First Meeting of Directors General of Civil Aviation
Western and Central African Region**

(Abuja, Nigeria, 19-21 March 2002)

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I am very pleased to be here with you for the first-ever meeting of Directors General of Civil Aviation for the Western and Central African Region. I would like to thank the Government of Nigeria and the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authorities for making this meeting possible.

We have come together at a pivotal moment in the development of civil aviation worldwide. There is an unprecedented focus on safety and security issues, primarily because of the events of 11 September in the United States of America. The air transport industry is still caught in a global downturn that is affecting the financial health of all components of civil aviation. And a return to traditional growth patterns in terms of passenger and air freight traffic is at least two years away.

The situation is compounded in Africa because of regional conflicts and serious deficiencies in the civil aviation infrastructure of many countries. These deficiencies must be addressed forcefully and corrected promptly. This will take courage, determination, resources and, above all, a commitment to total cooperation among all States and service providers represented here today.

The stakes are high. Air transport is a driver of economic development and a catalyst for business and tourism. On this continent, air transport is often the only means of reaching land-locked or isolated regions. All African States have everything to gain from creating, maintaining and enforcing a sound aviation system.

Fortunately, you now have at your disposal many of the basic elements to realize this objective.

First and foremost, you have information. The excellent working papers prepared for this conference provide a valuable and comprehensive description of the deficiencies and the required corrective actions to take in the air navigation, air traffic services, search and rescue and meteorology fields. One paper in particular builds on ICAO's efforts to encourage the development of practical global navigation satellite system applications as part of the transition towards CNS/ATM systems. The paper specifically deals with GNSS-based non-precision approaches, as a way to accelerate the benefits that can be derived from the use of new technologies.

There are also the excellent recommendations of the Seventh AFI Regional Air Navigation Meeting of 1997, which was held right here in Abuja. A number of practical solutions were suggested to alleviate the deficiencies which affect the safety, regularity and efficiency of flights in African airspace. These included the establishment of well-structured and financially independent autonomous airport authorities, a cooperative approach to airspace management and increased regionalization and globalization of upper airspace management.

Then there are the results of the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme. The audits conducted by ICAO under this programme have been very effective in identifying deficiencies in the implementation of safety standards, as well as potential systems' failures and difficulties experienced by civil aviation administrations. They have also been instrumental in highlighting identified unsafe conditions and providing on-site advice to civil aviation authorities and airlines.

I have personally looked at audit reports for African States and it is clear to me where significant operational and structural improvements can be made. We must concentrate on legislative and regulatory frameworks, safety management systems, and the critical sector of human resources.

As you know, the present scope of the Programme is limited to Annex 1 – *Personnel Licensing*, Annex 6 – *Operation of Aircraft* and Annex 8 – *Airworthiness of Aircraft*, although the 33rd Session of the ICAO Assembly, in September 2001, resolved that the Programme be expanded to Annex 11 — *Air Traffic Services*- and Annex 14 — *Aerodromes* as of 2004.

A similar mechanism which will soon be available is the ICAO Aviation Security Plan of Action endorsed by the High-level, Ministerial Conference on Aviation Security held in February at ICAO Headquarters. The core of the Plan is a programme of mandatory audits to evaluate aviation security in all 187 Member States of ICAO. This will help States identify and correct deficiencies in the implementation of ICAO security-related Standards. The security audit programme initially covers the period 2002 to 2004 and should get under way this summer.

What also came out of the Security Conference is the need to ensure that security measures do not disrupt or impede the flow of passengers, freight, mail or aircraft. This can be achieved by using technologies like machine-readable travel documents and biometrics to help us accelerate the handling of passengers, while increasing the level of security.

Our ultimate objective is to create a global security net which is so tight that not one further potential act of unlawful interference can slip through. For this to happen, a uniform approach is essential, because deficiencies in any part of the system constitute a threat to the entire global system. Like a chain, the aviation system is only as strong as its weakest link. A potential perpetrator will always try to find that weakest link, even though his target may be halfway around the world.

Of course, identifying deficiencies is one thing; finding the required technical or financial resources often may prove to be a daunting obstacle. There are solutions, however. The Security Conference, for example, called on States, international organizations and the civil aviation industry to provide, on a voluntary basis, adequate funding and/or assistance in kind to implement the aviation security Plan of Action. As always, there is ICAO's very successful Technical Cooperation Programme, which has a good track record of helping States locate and obtain resources, not just for security but in all areas of civil aviation.

One other potential source of funding which holds promise is the International Financial Facility for Aviation Safety. IFFAS is your initiative and could grow into an effective method for financing safety-related projects identified through the ICAO Universal Safety Audit Programme and by planning and implementation regional groups. The concept of an IFFAS was endorsed at the 33rd Session of the Assembly, which requested the Council of ICAO to pursue its establishment early in the new triennium. The Council met on 8 March to review various approaches for setting up an IFFAS and decided to further evaluate it through a study group involving the Council and the Secretariat. The Council will revisit the project in a few weeks time during its 166th Session. In your deliberations over the next few days, I would urge you to emphasize a strategy for promoting and supporting the establishment of an IFFAS.

I would also urge you to look at ratification of amendments to the Convention on International Civil Aviation not yet in force and other international air law instruments. One of particular interest is the International treaty on financing and leasing of aircraft adopted on 16 November 2001 in South Africa at the Diplomatic Conference held in Cape Town under the auspices of the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Institute for the unification of Private Law (Unidroit). The new legal

instrument sets rules to facilitate asset-based financing and can be of great assistance in securing external financing for aviation development projects.

My friends, your future is truly in your hands. The course has been well charted and the time for action has come. Decisions have to be made and the process starts here and now in Abuja.

The fact that representatives from so many different regions are taking part in this meeting is encouraging because inter- and intra-regional coordination and cooperation is the only option in our collective drive to provide the citizens of Africa with a civil aviation system that will stimulate economic development and contribute to their well-being for years to come. And I assure you that ICAO is dedicated to doing all we can to assist you in that exciting and challenging endeavour.