

**Message from the President of the Council of the  
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), Dr. Assad Kotaite,  
on the theme "Enhancing Flight Safety Through Global Co-operation"  
for the world-wide celebration of International Civil Aviation Day  
on 7 December 1997**

I have been associated with the International Civil Aviation Organization now for the past 45 years and it is my firm belief that air transport still remains the safest mode of transportation today. However, I see two disturbing trends that can jeopardize this formidable achievement of our modern civilization.

The first is the rate of airline accidents around the world. Up until a decade or so ago, the rate of accidents consistently went down, thanks primarily to improvements in technology and air navigation systems. Since then, however, accident rates have remained stable. As the number of passengers increases from 1,35 billion annually to some 2 billion in a few years, this could translate into a corresponding increase in the number of accidents. We must not allow this to happen.

The second is the implication for aviation safety of such fundamental social and political changes as globalization, privatization of government services and liberalization of economic controls, increasing environmental controls and the emergence of new technologies. Through all of this, governments cannot divest themselves of their responsibility of ensuring the optimum level of safety of civil aviation at the international level. Again, we must not allow this to happen.

I am deeply convinced that the solution to these two issues lies in an unprecedented level of co-operation among countries and a corresponding level of global co-ordination in all aspects of civil aviation which affect safety. After all, safety is not a national issue, nor is it a regional or continental issue. It is a global issue. Human beings travel all over the world regardless of political boundaries and they are entitled to the uniform application of internationally recognized safety standards wherever they may go.

During the coming year, I look forward to continue working in close cooperation with civil aviation authorities of all 185 ICAO Contracting States in making the theme of this year's International Civil Aviation Day, "Enhancing Flight Safety Through Global Co-operation", a dynamic reality.

When one deals with human life, one accident is still one too many.