

**Message from the President of the Council of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), Dr. Assad Kotaite,
on the theme "Flying Safely Into the 21st Century"
for the world-wide celebration of International Civil Aviation Day
on 7 December 1998**

Aviation safety is the fundamental *raison d'être* of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). It is embedded in the mandate of the Organization, which is to promote the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation through the establishment of Standards and Recommended Practices, or SARPs.

Since the creation of ICAO in 1944, the growth of civil aviation has been phenomenal. In 1945, there were barely 9 million passengers on the world's airlines scheduled services. In 1997, that figure rose to 1.5 billion passengers. At this rate of growth, the total could reach 4.5 billion by the middle of the next century.

Ensuring air transport remains the safest mode of transportation in years to come will require that two fundamental conditions be met. The first is the consistent world-wide application of ICAO SARPs, because the level of safety in aviation is and always will be directly related to the level of implementation of these standards.

This concerted action will become increasingly important as the world aviation community deals with such complex developments as the privatization of government services, the liberalization of economic controls and the emergence of new technologies, not to mention the ubiquitous globalization phenomenon. Through all of this, Contracting States must continue to fulfill their responsibility of ensuring the safety of their respective airspace.

The world-wide implementation of CNS/ATM systems, which involves the integration of satellite and computer technologies to communications, navigation, surveillance and air traffic management, is a second essential condition for the safe and orderly growth of civil aviation in the 21st century. This future-oriented air navigation system is the single, most complex and far-reaching initiative ever undertaken in the history of civil aviation.

It is my firm belief that success in both areas, the universal implementation of ICAO SARPs and of CNS/ATM systems, will require an unprecedented level of co-operation among countries and a corresponding level of global co-ordination in all aspects of civil aviation safety.

Ultimately, 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 across political boundaries. They are entitled to a uniform application of internationally recognized safety standards wherever they may go.

ICAO will always devote itself to its primary task of promoting the highest level of aviation safety, so that we may all be confident of "Flying Safely Into the 21st Century".