

**Message from the President of the Council of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Dr. Assad Kotaite,
for the worldwide celebration of
International Civil Aviation Day on 7 December 1999**

As I reflect on the transition of our societies from the twentieth to the twenty-first century, I am profoundly heartened by the extraordinary potential of civil aviation to bring individuals as well as countries closer together.

This inherent quality of aviation was expressed eloquently as early as 1944, in the preamble to the *Convention on International Civil Aviation*, the document that created the International Civil Aviation Organization, ICAO.

“Whereas the future development of international civil aviation can greatly help to create and preserve friendship and understanding among the nations and peoples of the world...to promote that cooperation between nations and peoples upon which the peace of the world depends...”

Has the twentieth century fulfilled this promise? I believe so. Air transport has brought billions of people together, relatives, friends, tourists, and countless others engaged in all fields of human endeavour. We have come to know each other better than ever before and, in this way, hopefully gained a better understanding and appreciation of who we are as individuals and as members of a global community.

ICAO is proud to have played a central role in this profoundly human achievement, by acting as the international forum for its 185 Contracting States to maintain an infinitely complex yet resilient structure of international regulations and agreements that make it possible to fly safely and efficiently to any country on the face of the earth.

I am particularly sensitive to the power of aviation to bring nations with conflicting interests to sit around the same table, sometimes for the first time in decades, and discuss terms of mutual benefit, ultimately benefiting the rest of the world. In this sense, civil aviation is often the prelude to the healing and cementing of relations between countries.

But what of the twenty-first century? Can we sustain the momentum? Again, I believe so. A most graphic illustration is the manner in which not only nations but the entire world aviation community have cooperated in meeting the challenge of the date change to the year 2000, or Y2K.

Friendships have been struck and cooperation has been strengthened, strategic communications channels have been opened, dialogue has flourished where there was little or none before. A seed has been planted. If we nourish it and allow it to grow unencumbered, we can literally usher in a new era of friendship and cooperation such as the world has never seen.

Let this be the spirit of our celebrations as we salute International Civil Aviation Day!