

**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 2000**

Modern civil aviation is an extremely complex, global system of interaction between human beings and machines. Appropriately, universally accepted and implemented standards are essential for transporting passengers and merchandise by air safely and efficiently around the world. Without such uniform rules and procedures, aviation would be at best chaotic and at worst unsafe.

The Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) contained in the 18 Annexes to the Convention on International Civil Aviation of 1944 have made it possible for global air transport to flourish for more than half a century, in a safe and orderly manner. Collectively, they provide an effective and comprehensive regulatory framework for all aspects of civil aviation, from air traffic management and flight operations, to accident prevention and the environment.

Civil aviation is extremely safe. When accidents occur, however, it is often because the rules and procedures outlined in the SARPs and related guidance material prepared by ICAO are not adhered to properly. Today, as always, the safety of civil aviation depends on the relevance and level of implementation of SARPs by ICAO's 185 Contracting States.

A primary task of ICAO is to continually revise SARPs, so that regulations keep pace with the rapid technological and operational transformation of civil aviation. This process involves a broad consultative process with Contracting States, international aviation organizations and industry representatives alike, culminating in a broad consensus on new or updated SARPs.

Equally critical, ICAO assists Contracting States to identify and correct deficiencies in the implementation of SARPs, primarily through the ICAO Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme. This mandatory, ground-breaking initiative assesses a State's implementation of safety oversight and relevant ICAO SARPs, associated procedures, guidance material and safety-related practices. It provides for action plans to address identified deficiencies and direct assistance, when required, to carry out corrective measures.

At present, the Programme is limited to legislation, procedures and practices as they relate to personnel licensing, and the operation and airworthiness of aircraft. Subject to a decision by the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the ICAO Assembly in 2001, the Programme may be expanded to cover air traffic services, aerodromes, and aircraft accident and incident investigation.

ICAO's Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme has proven extremely effective in solidifying safety oversight programmes of Contracting States. I have no doubt that it will save lives and that it will contribute substantially to ensuring the safety of our skies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.