

**Message from the Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Renato Cláudio Costa Pereira,
for the worldwide celebration of
International Civil Aviation Day on 7 December 2002**

The 100th anniversary of powered, sustained and controlled flight provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the contribution of the millions of people worldwide who make air travel safe and secure for all of us. Collectively, they give shape and direction to an incredibly complex and sophisticated system that we often take for granted because it works so well.

On the front lines are airline workers, from passenger agents at reservations and ticket counters to flight attendants and pilots. They are the most visible to passengers yet they are but the tip of a huge iceberg. At airports, personnel on the ground and in the offices, catering and fuelling staff, baggage handlers and maintenance people, and many others are all busy behind the scenes to support on-going airline operations.

There are the people who design and build the aircraft we fly in and those that maintain them at peak performance. There are those who operate the air traffic control systems that allow thousands of planes to criss-cross our skies with clock-work accuracy. And there are industry associations who represent their points of view in a concerted effort to continually improve all forms of air travel, whether scheduled or charter, business aviation or cargo.

From a regulatory perspective, Directors General of Civil Aviation and their teams of experts in all 188 Contracting States of ICAO have created and maintain a cohesive and harmonized set of services and facilities that, day in and day out, make it possible for millions of passengers to travel safely and efficiently within their national boundaries and to the far corners of the world.

In the Organization I represent, specialists at Headquarters and in Regional Offices focus on assisting Contracting States to ensure the integrity of the regulatory framework of international civil aviation, by updating standards, procedures and guidelines, and assisting States in meeting their financial and human resources needs.

At its core, aviation is people working for people. Everyone is essential to the successful completion of a flight, to getting passengers from departure to destination safely and in good health. This is as true today as it was throughout the development of air travel. It seems that aviation has always held a special power of attraction for people wanting to help other people. Based on that record to date, the second century of aviation is in good hands.