

**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 2003**

On this International Civil Aviation Day 2003, ICAO launches one year of celebrations leading up to the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Organization, created on 7 December 1944. Ten days later, on 17 December, the world marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first flight of the Wright Brothers, synonymous with the birth of powered, controlled and sustained flight.

During this first century of flight, air transport forever changed our global society: economically, politically, socially and culturally. Such a transformation could only have been achieved by the enabling technical and operational infrastructure agreed to by sovereign States and implemented through ICAO and its charter, the *Convention on International Civil Aviation*.

I believe that global air transport has largely met the lofty aspirations of those who, over the years, have so eloquently expressed its potential for the good of mankind. There comes to mind such thoughts as "the bringing together of peoples, languages, ideas and values", "a tool for humanity to serve humanity", and the perennial preamble to the Chicago Convention which argues that air travel could greatly help to create and preserve friendship and understanding among the nations and peoples of the world.

The road has been fraught with obstacles: technological, operational, political and economic. Always they were overcome through dialogue and cooperation at all levels. For the past two years or so, we seem to have experienced one crisis after another: the shockwave caused by the events of 11 September 2001, both in terms of financial instability and security threats, particularly at airports; the SARS epidemic; environmental pressures associated with the resumption of growth patterns, all of this against the backdrop of a fundamental restructuring of the air transport industry. Dialogue and cooperation will be even more needed as we meet these and other challenges of tomorrow.

As we celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of flight and embark upon celebrations leading up to the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ICAO next year, let us remember that international civil aviation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can, and should, be viewed as a constantly evolving project of unprecedented proportions and potential for the whole of humankind. That, ultimately, is the vision of air transport, a powerful force for the continued well-being of every man, woman and child on our small planet.