

**Message from the Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Dr. Taïeb Chérif,
for the worldwide celebration of
International Civil Aviation Day on 7 December 2003**

The Secretariat of ICAO is composed of dedicated men and women from all parts of the world and from all fields of aviation expertise. For close to 60 years, it has effectively managed countless programmes and activities related directly to the safety, efficiency and regularity of the global air transport system.

Its first responsibility is to maintain current and relevant the regulatory framework of international civil aviation, through the development and updating of operational and technical standards in such varied sectors as airworthiness, air traffic management, personnel licensing and training, accident investigation and prevention, aerodromes, and many more. It also provides leadership and direction in the formulation of policies in such fields as liberalization, privatization, airport operations and the environment.

A measure of its effectiveness is the current level of safety of air travel around the world. In 1947, the first year that ICAO kept records, of 21 million passengers carried, 590 lost their lives in 34 aircraft accidents (excluding the USSR). In 2002, with over 1.6 billion passengers carried, there were 791 fatalities in 14 accidents (including the Commonwealth of Independent States). Given air transport's extraordinary growth over the years, this is a remarkable achievement indeed.

As it looks to the future, ICAO is focused on constantly improving aviation safety, while addressing new and emerging threats to security, in an era of restructuring of the air transport industry. In so doing, it is facing formidable challenges of its own. While its groundbreaking initiatives in the areas of safety, security, air navigation and technical cooperation are proving extremely valuable, they are exerting mounting pressure in terms of human and budgetary resources.

The Organization is responding by streamlining its management processes and increasing the efficiency of its operations; making provision for innovative sources of income that are complementary to the essential contributions of its 188 Member States and seeking ever closer collaboration with all players in the aeronautical sector.

ICAO is indispensable to the safe and orderly growth of international civil aviation. With the continued unwavering support of Member States and of the aviation community, it will pursue relentlessly its mission to provide all the citizens of the world with a global air transport system that is as safe, secure, efficient, and economical as is humanly possible to achieve.