

**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 2004**

The principle of global cooperation among nations of the world is at the heart of the *Convention on International Civil Aviation*, which created ICAO when it was signed on 7 December 1944, in Chicago. Through 60 years, global cooperation has coalesced the Contracting States of the Organization and various aviation entities to create and maintain an extraordinarily sound and efficient global air transport system.

It was not an easy task. There were innumerable challenges to realizing the initial vision of a globally harmonized environment, as captured in the Preamble to the *Chicago Convention*, "in order that international civil aviation may be developed in a safe and orderly manner and that international air transport services may be established on the basis of equality of opportunity and operated soundly and economically".

Yet we succeeded, by working jointly towards a common objective, in spite of sometimes diverging views and interests. The year 2003 was the safest year on record since the creation of ICAO. Always vulnerable to acts of unlawful interference, air transport is nevertheless secure. The number of passengers on scheduled services alone has grown to 1.6 billion since 1944 and should reach 2 billion in the not too distant future. And the renewed period of growth we are now enjoying in terms of passenger and cargo traffic is matched with an equally renewed determination to secure the foundation for a healthy, effective and efficient global air transport system.

At the same time, our vision has evolved and expanded, in keeping with the extreme complexity of our modern society. We look to solidifying a regulatory framework that ensures: optimum safety and security; the continued progressive, worldwide liberalization of air transport; a globally interoperable, harmonized and seamless air traffic management system; maximum compatibility between the safe and orderly development of civil aviation and the quality of the environment; and the further development of a unified, global legal framework.

In a world tempted by unilateral action on a national or regional basis, we must not forget that international aviation can only grow safely and securely through multilateral action. Global cooperation has always been and remains the solution to all of our global aviation challenges.