ICAO Performance Symposium, March 2007

Address by Víctor M. Aguado, Director General EUROCONTROL

Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr President,

Good morning.

Bonjour à toutes et à tous.

Je tiens avant tout à exprimer mes remerciements à l'OACI pour l'organisation de ce Symposium mondial sur les performances du Système de Navigation Aérienne.

C'est pour moi un honneur ainsi qu'un plaisir de m'adresser à vous en cette occasion.

Ce Symposium arrive à point nommé dans l'histoire de l'aviation commerciale, qui atteint aujourd'hui un moment clé dans sa phase de mondialisation.

Il est utile, pour en apprécier l'ampleur, de porter un regard sur quelques grandes évolutions de ces dernières décennies.

Es sin duda fascinante comprobar como el sistema de navegación aérea ha evolucionado a lo largo de los años.

No hace mucho tiempo términos como “performance” (o comportamiento del sistema) y “productividad” no aparecían en el vocabulario utilizado en la gestión del tráfico aéreo.

En los primeros años del control del tráfico aéreo, no había nada que tuviera relación alguna con lo que hoy pudiera conocerse como la gestión de “performances”.

Pero no nos equivoquemos, los servicios de navegación aérea han funcionado satisfactoriamente, garantizando la separación segura entre aeronaves.

Y han funcionado satisfactoriamente gracias al alto nivel de profesionalidad de todo el personal imbricado en los servicios de navegación aérea, una característica que por cierto subsiste en los servicios actuales.

Cuando los niveles de tráfico eran 200 veces inferiores a los volúmenes de hoy en día, poco más era necesario.

But with the growing air traffic complexity that became prevalent in the 1980s, **pressure started to build for more focus to be given to performance in the Air Navigation System.**

So, rudimentary performance indicators were created.

These were primarily for safety, drawn from data on accidents attributable to Air Navigation Services.

But some were also developed for capacity, incorporating some measurement of delay, although these were still rather primitive.

Gradually, words like 'performance' and 'productivity' made their way into the vocabulary of the Air Navigation System.

Today, with the growing trend towards the corporatisation of Air Navigation Infrastructure and Air Navigation Service Provision, there is increasing pressure for technical systems and services to meet performance objectives,

Let us not forget that Air Navigation Services remain natural monopolies, while States, as per the Chicago Convention, retain the ultimate responsibility for ensuring safe and efficient services.

So three questions could be formulated:

1. Who guarantees local, regional and global minimum performance on: safety, cost/effectiveness, efficiency, environmental impact?

2. How can it be done?

3. And, could any meaningful action still be taken on a purely national level?

The example of Europe is interesting in this respect.

85 % of air traffic in Europe is intra-European.

On the other hand, for individual States, domestic air traffic stands at a much lower percentage.

For example, even in some big European countries, domestic traffic is only 15 to 20 % of the total.

The need to address performance in a sufficiently homogeneous manner becomes clear.

Performance management has meant evolving from a national level to a more regional level.

To this end, EUROCONTROL created a Performance Review Commission in 1997.

Its role is to advise on the setting of performance indicators, propose performance targets, and provide guidelines on economic regulation.

This Commission of 12 selected members is fully independent and reports to the EUROCONTROL Council.

And while this system was designed to deal with Europe's own complex circumstances, some of its features may be of interest to other parts of the world.

By exchanging information on their respective experiences, all regions will have an opportunity to raise their performance levels.

This is all the better since it is indeed important today that all regions gradually reach equivalent levels in performance management.

This regional approach can then feed into a global performance monitoring and management framework.

Because today, having an air transport industry with a global reach, a regional level is no longer really sufficient.

The global dimension of air transport calls for a globally enhanced Air Navigation System.

Today is the first time in the history of commercial aviation that we have had a world symposium on the performance of the Air Navigation System.

This symposium provides a perfect opportunity to start defining and agreeing on what can be done on a world-wide level.

For this, the principle of subsidiarity should prevail, keeping at national level or regional level what is best left there.

To begin with, global goals and targets should capture the essential dimension of the Air Navigation System in terms of both civil as well as civil/military cooperation aspects.

They should also cover the whole span of Air Navigation System performance, including:

- safety performance
- operational performance
- technical performance
- economic and management performance.

Taking safety first:

- ***Safety*** takes precedence over any other performance area.

Good performance in the field of safety means fewer risks and a reduced number of accidents and incidents.

As safety touches upon all the subjects we have in this Symposium, it must be borne in mind in all the sessions.

In order to ensure global safety, minimum safety performance levels must be ensured, irrespective of other key performance areas.

For this, global safety indicators should be developed so as to enable world-wide safety performance review.

In order to obtain useful safety data, safety occurrences must be properly reported.

This in turn requires a Just Culture, whereby no blame is assigned except in cases of gross or wilful negligence.

The implementation of a Just Culture on a global level is therefore an essential safety priority.

- Moving on to ***non-safety key performance areas***, they must be carefully balanced and suitable trade-offs must be found between them.

Sometimes trade-offs will have to be found even within a key performance area itself.

- The ***environment*** is a case in point.

For example, noise-abatement procedures may actually increase CO2 emissions and even compromise capacity.

I take this opportunity to bring to your attention the fact that the environmental dimension of the Air Navigation System will in future have to be emphasised.

Its profile has risen significantly since the 11th Air Navigation Conference, as will be seen in the next Assembly.

It has been estimated that Air Traffic Management could ultimately help aviation deliver up to 10 % reduction in CO2 emissions.

In Europe today, environmental measures in Air Traffic Management already reduce CO2 emissions by 2 million tonnes per year, equivalent to 1 % per annum.

- Other areas which require emphasis from a performance perspective are ***flight efficiency and the economic aspects*** of Air Navigation Services, yet these have so far not been given much prominence.

And yet, cost-effectiveness and flight efficiency each have major economic and environmental implications.

As you see, the performance of the Air Navigation System is intricately linked to that of the aviation value chain as a whole.

Now, once global targets are in place, performance-based development and performance-based standardisation becomes possible.

Performance-based development and standardisation represents a major shift from technology-driven to performance-driven, from solution-based to performance-based strategies.

By agreeing on global goals and targets, flexibility is given to service providers and industry on how to implement their objectives.

This flexibility is a major new advantage given to these stakeholders.

Benefits will include more efficient standards, specifications and requirements, resulting in homogeneous airborne equipment, and the improved use of airspace.

A question for the Symposium remains: can we rely on performance-based standardisation alone?

After the setting of global performance goals and targets, and performance-based development, the final stage in global performance management is **global performance review and oversight.**

Phasing this in will ensure adherence to global goals, as well as helping us to identify corrective action when required, updating plans to address gaps.

This process is not about apportioning blame.

Performance review is not about a blame culture, not bad guys and good guys, but everybody contributing to the overall objectives within their own operating environment.

Performance review is rather the means of ensuring targets are ultimately adhered to.

Just like global target setting, global performance review could be an ideal task for ICAO.

In this respect, good data will be essential, data that people feel confident sharing.

This confidence should help bring about commitment from all major stakeholders, towards a full set of Key Performance Indicators.

EUROCONTROL has been working on target setting as well as performance review over the last ten years.

This action has helped raise the performance of the Air Navigation System in the European region.

This European development is just an example of attempts to put a regional dimension to the process of enhancing the Air Navigation System.

Such regional approaches can form the basis on which to build a global process to be led by ICAO on a world-wide level.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In this respect, the **outcome of this Symposium** will be crucial.

Now that the drive for global performance in the Air Navigation System has been established, the results of the Symposium will enable us to move on.

Only with this breakthrough in the performance of the Air Navigation System can the predicted growth in air transport throughout the world be dealt with successfully.

The aim could be a global framework for a global performance-based system.

Global system improvement would follow.

This Symposium may be the starting event for a new era.

I certainly look forward to the upcoming sessions and their results.

Thank you.