



**Address by the President of the Council
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González,
to the 44th Conference of Directors General of Civil Aviation,
Asia and Pacific Regions**

(Xi'an, China - 22 October 2007)

It is a pleasure to be here with you in Xi'an for the 44th Conference of Directors General of Civil Aviation of the Asia and Pacific Regions. I would like to thank our host country of China for its warm hospitality and extend my best wishes and those of the Secretary General of ICAO for the success of the coming Summer Olympics in Beijing.

We meet at a time when the global air transport system is strong and vibrant. We do face, however, an enormous collective challenge which can be summed up in one word: growth. World airline traffic is expected to increase steadily to the year 2025, by an average of 4.6 per cent annually for passenger traffic and 6.6 per cent for cargo traffic. Air transport in the Asia and Pacific Regions is expected to grow the fastest of any other region. Our main challenge will be to manage this growth while maintaining the safety, security, sustainability and efficiency of civil aviation.

Throughout the Asia and Pacific Regions, billions of extra dollars will have to be invested in buying new aircraft, building or expanding airport facilities, modernizing air navigation systems, as well as hiring and training personnel to ensure that systems and facilities function at peak performance.

These issues and others were reviewed by the 36th Session of the ICAO Assembly held just a few weeks ago and which attracted a record 179 Member States out of 190 and 44 observer delegations. This exceptional turnout provided a wide range of views and solid global endorsement for Assembly decisions and resolutions. I would like to spend a few minutes on some of the highlights.

In the area of safety, participants emphasized transparency and sharing of information as fundamental to further improving safety. This was particularly evident in the very positive reaction to the newly-created Implementation Support and Development Programme – ISD, which also promotes regional safety oversight systems and assistance to States, safety information analysis and exchange, and partnership with Contracting States and other stakeholders for rectifying deficiencies identified through ICAO safety audits.

I was particularly sensitive to the comments of the Delegation of China which spoke of enhancing regional cooperation and regional institutions in striving for greater aviation safety in the Region. Regional and sub-regional safety oversight organizations, where States pool their resources and together develop common solutions can lead to considerable economies of scale and make it easier for all States to discharge their responsibilities for safety oversight. A cooperative strategy can also involve partnership initiatives with other States, industry, air navigation service providers, financial institutions and other stakeholders. The regional approach has worked very well in other parts of the world and I am sure it can be as successful in Asia.

On the subject of security, the Assembly asked the Council to undertake a thorough review of the development process of security standards and to explore the possibility of holding special aviation security assemblies or divisional meetings to address security challenges in a more comprehensive manner. It also asked for a plan to integrate the Aviation Security Plan of Action into the Regular Programme Budget for the triennium 2011-2013. At the same time, the Assembly was conscious of the need to facilitate the transfer of passengers at airports without compromising security. It emphasized the importance of training and adequate support in correcting deficiencies identified through the security audits. In keeping with the benefits of sharing of information, ICAO will be working on a formula for the introduction of a limited level of transparency of security audit results, for greater coordination and effectiveness of measures.

As expected, environmental protection was the focus of much discussion at the Assembly, particularly around market-based options to reduce emissions. One of the main outcomes was the decision to create a new Group on International Aviation and Climate Change composed of senior government officials. The mandate of the Group is to develop over the next two years or so an aggressive ICAO Programme of Action on International Aviation and Climate Change, while taking into account potential implications of such actions for developing as well as developed countries.

The Programme will formulate an implementation framework consisting of strategies and measures that Contracting States of ICAO can use to achieve emissions reductions. It will also identify fuel efficiency goals and means of measuring progress. I expect the recommendations of this Group will be a turning point in our efforts to minimize the effects of aviation on the environment, with innovative solutions and concrete results. The Assembly Resolution also requests the Council to convene a high-level meeting to review the Programme of Action recommended by the Group.

In the area of air navigation, the Assembly requested that ICAO ensure that the revised Global Air Navigation Plan be continuously updated in light of operational and technical developments and facilitate the development and monitoring of regional, sub-regional and national plans based on the Global Plan. There were a number of recommendations to improve other elements of air navigation in order to increase its effectiveness of operations worldwide.

Finally, with regard to economic issues, the Assembly asked ICAO to continue to play a leadership role in the liberalization of air transport, while assisting States in the provision of airport and air navigation services through sound policies. This will be the subject of a Conference on the Economics of Airports and Air Navigation Services scheduled to be held from 15 to 20 September 2008 and to which of course you are all invited.

I could spend much more time listing other major accomplishments of the Assembly, but I would like to suggest a common theme running through most of the Resolutions and decisions. It is the expressed desire of States for more guidance and more support from ICAO in the implementation of Standards and Recommended Practices as well as provisions of the Chicago Convention. There was also a clear signal that States want a strong and effective ICAO as the global regulator for international civil aviation.

In his presentation on increasing the effectiveness of the Organization, the Secretary General outlined a number of measures that point to the rapid transformation of ICAO in this direction.

In 2004, ICAO initiated a new management philosophy based on the concepts of performance, results, accountability and transparency in the pursuit of the Strategic Objectives approved by the Council. The change took into account the request of the Council to connect the Strategic Objectives to the Regular Programme Budget. This led to the creation of the ICAO Business Plan, which in effect translates each of the Strategic Objectives into specific Action Plans. This makes it possible to establish resources more effectively in the transition to results-based planning and results-based budgeting.

One aspect of special interest to States is the emphasis on functional and operational integration, both within Headquarters and with Regional Offices. In this way, ICAO, through its Regional Office in Bangkok for example, will be closer to States and be better positioned to assist in providing products and services.

ICAO is proud of the Technical Cooperation Programme. The number of regional programmes and in-country projects under development and implementation now reaches more than 100. This is as representative of the needs of States for assistance as it is of the importance attached to ICAO for resolving deficiencies and assisting Governments, airports, air traffic management service providers and airlines.

Of particular importance to States and ICAO are the regional cooperative programmes covering such important aviation issues as safety, security, meteorology, medicine and pandemic preparedness. These programmes work, as witnessed by the sizeable contributions from industry who realize their value for establishing policy dialogue, cooperating, achieving harmonization in compliance with Standards and Recommended Practices and collaborating with operators and service providers under the umbrella of ICAO.

Increasingly, States in the Asia and Pacific Regions are utilizing ICAO services in the provision of technical cooperation, such as advisory and operational assistance.

It is also clear that more and more administrations see the added value of ICAO assistance in the procurement of equipment needed to address infrastructure deficiencies or development requirements such as in airport construction or upgrading.

Air transport has much to bring to the world in terms of economic and social benefits. As expressed in the preamble to the Chicago Convention, international civil aviation can greatly help to create and preserve friendship and understanding among the nations and peoples of the world, yet it must be developed in a safe and orderly manner, and be established on the basis of equality of opportunity and operated soundly and economically.

During this Conference, you have the opportunity to advance these ideals in real terms for your Region and, in some way, for the rest of the world. I wish you success in your deliberations.