



**Remarks by the President of the Council
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González,
to the 17th Airports Council International (ACI)
World Annual General Assembly**

(Buenos Aires, Argentina, 6 November 2007)

Distinguished participants to the ACI World Annual General Assembly, it is a distinct pleasure for me to say a few words on the leadership of ICAO in addressing some of the challenges posed by the growth of the air transport industry, particularly the impact of aviation on the environment at airports.

The latest ICAO forecast is for an average annual growth rate of 4.6 per cent until 2025, when the total number of passengers should reach some 4.5 billion. The degree to which we collectively manage growth effectively, uniformly and consistently in all countries and regions will determine the level of safety, security, sustainability and efficiency of the global air transport system.

For its part, ICAO has intensified its leadership in a focused and proactive manner, under four basic principles – implementation, performance, results and transparency. These principles have accelerated the transition of ICAO to a performance- and results-based Organization.

In the area of safety, a turning point was the Conference of Directors General of Civil Aviation held at ICAO in March 2006. The Conference reaffirmed the critical importance of transparency and the sharing of safety-related information as fundamental tenets of a safe air transport system. It also recognized that safety is a shared responsibility and that advancements in global safety are only possible through the leadership of ICAO and a cooperative, collaborative and coordinated effort among all stakeholders, including airports.

At the heart of this strategy is the ICAO Global Aviation Safety Plan coupled with the Global Aviation Safety Roadmap prepared by the Industry Safety Strategy Group and of which ACI is a member. The integration of the Roadmap transformed the Safety Plan into a proactive planning methodology for ICAO, States, regions and industry to work together in achieving specific safety targets. I have no doubt that greater transparency and the rigorous application of proven management processes will lead to considerable progress in meeting common goals. I encourage you to make use of the ICAO Safety Plan when you update your own safety strategies.

In the case of aviation security, leadership for ICAO means helping States in their efforts to implement anti-terrorist measures that are effective and that safeguard the efficiency of air transport and public confidence in air travel. The Organization will continue to work with States and the industry on adapting security-related methods and technologies to meet new and emerging threats, while at the same time facilitating the rapid and efficient flow of passengers through airports.

Leadership also means dealing quickly with events, as in the case of the alleged terrorist plot in the United Kingdom in August 2006, potentially involving liquids used as explosives. ICAO reacted in a rapid, proactive and cooperative manner by bringing together States concerned, law enforcement agencies and industry representatives like ACI to develop an effective response.

Working with Member States to increase the efficiency of air transport operations is another dimension of ICAO's leadership role. In November 2006, the Council approved a revised Global Air Navigation Plan which represents a new benchmark in the implementation of a global air traffic management system. The ultimate goal is the viability of the future air navigation system and its continued contribution to global economic development, while preserving the environment.

We have also focused much attention on developing a contingency plan for a potential avian influenza pandemic, in cooperation with the World Health Organization and industry partners. Our objective is a globally harmonized risk management programme involving airports around the world.

The last point I wish to cover this morning is one of the most high profile – the environment. The position of ACI on the subject was made clear at the ICAO Assembly last September in Montreal. It included a request for more stringent standards for noise and emissions. For ICAO, setting Standards that reflect the latest available technology has always been the motivating factor behind our work. For more than forty years, through the Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP), ICAO has adopted increasingly stringent standards. Together with technological progress, these have helped to reduce levels of carbon monoxide by 50 per cent since the 1960s and unburned hydrocarbons and smoke by around 90 per cent.

In the case of nitrogen oxide emissions, or NO_x, a new standard was endorsed in 2004, applicable to new engines from 2008. Further reductions will be helped along by medium and longer term goals established by ICAO to give manufacturers direction for new developments over the next 20 years and more. The same forward-looking approach will be applied to noise and fuel burn.

In cooperation with international bodies such as the World Health Organization, ICAO is expanding its knowledge of the effects of aviation emissions on human health and welfare. In fact, a CAEP workshop is being held this week in ICAO on assessing current scientific knowledge, uncertainties and gaps quantifying climate change, noise and air quality aviation impacts.

ICAO has also recently published substantial guidance material related to local air quality. Available on the ICAO website is the first part of a guidance manual for States in implementing best practices with respect to local air quality at airports and in assessing and quantifying airport source emissions. The second part dedicated to dispersion modelling and airport quality measurement should be ready by 2010. The third part will address mitigation and interrelationships. Also, in September ICAO published guidance on Aircraft Emission Charges Related to Local Air Quality and the last Assembly adopted a new Appendix H to the Assembly Resolution on environmental protection entirely dedicated to the issue of local air quality.

I believe we are making substantial progress concerning the impact of aviation around airports. With the traditional excellent cooperation of ACI, I am convinced we can achieve much more in the future.

Of course, we must not lose sight of the global challenge of climate change. On this subject, the Assembly agreed to create a Group on International Aviation and Climate Change composed of senior government officials. The Group's mandate will be to recommend an aggressive ICAO Programme of Action and an implementation framework consisting of strategies and measures for Member States of ICAO to achieve emissions reductions.

We all know that addressing aviation's impact on the environment is a highly complex challenge, one that requires a concerted and holistic approach. We must persist in our drive to reduce emissions at source, by making engines even more fuel efficient and by working on alternative fuels to reduce fuel emissions altogether. We must focus even more on operational measures that reduce flight times and increase efficiency, thereby reducing fuel burn and related emissions.

We need to continually expand our scientific and technical understanding of the effect of emissions on the atmosphere, so that our decisions are made on the basis of the most authoritative and credible information available. The first-ever Environmental Report published by ICAO and available on our website, provides a comprehensive update on technical and policy aspects of aircraft noise and engine emissions.

As the global forum for international aviation matters, ICAO is exercising its leadership in a more proactive way, by bringing together all parties concerned. Our role is to build bridges among sometimes widely diverging views and interests, to reach and maintain an appropriate balance between the growth of air transport and environmental protection.

Fortunately, there are positive signs that we are taking more consequential actions. Environmental concerns are definitely permeating the planning and strategies of most global aviation stakeholders, and public pressure is affecting a real influence on moving the debate forward.

In closing, let me assure you that ICAO is sensitive to the priorities of airports regarding noise and local air quality. We will pursue our long-established process of developing more stringent standards and procedures, in keeping with the evolution of information and resources available, while at the same time focusing on the planetary challenge of climate change.

This ACI Assembly can help the process along by strengthening the emerging consensus and by generating new perspectives, as well as innovative and viable solutions. This is a global problem *par excellence* and it cannot be resolved without global cooperation. We must all work together to a higher-order purpose, that aviation should improve the quality of life for everyone on the planet.

I thank you for your attention and wish you every success.