



/

**Address by the President of the Council of the  
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),  
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González,  
to the Eleventh Meeting of Civil Aviation Authorities  
of the South American Region (RAAC/11)**

(Santiago, Chile, 6 May 2009)

It is a great honour for me to be with you for this Eleventh Meeting of Civil Aviation Authorities of the South American Region. I wish to thank the Director General of Civil Aviation of Chile for kindly inviting me to participate in this timely gathering.

This meeting is important for two reasons – because of the subject matter you will cover and because of the economic context in which we find ourselves. I will address these two aspects in my remarks this morning.

Safety, of course, remains our top priority. The Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) is now ten years old and has been a great incentive for States and stakeholders to further improve the overall safety level of facilities and processes. As USOAP will be coming to an end in 2010, we need to anticipate the introduction of the Continuous Monitoring Approach – the CMA. Although this new initiative will require an increased involvement of States in the collection of data and follow-up activities, it will enhance even more the ability to oversee the level of safety throughout the air transport system.

We also need to strengthen regulatory frameworks, to ensure the full implementation of ICAO Standards, procedures and guidance material, as well as resolution of safety issues as they come up. One option we have often promoted is the concept of autonomous and well-funded regional civil aviation authorities that can fulfil regulatory responsibilities in a cost effective manner. I will touch on this subject a little later. Other practices that need to be emphasized are State Safety Programmes and Safety Management Systems. Although a lot of emphasis has been placed on these programmes in the Region, I am confident that they will produce concrete results in the not too distant future.

Concerning security, the key word is vigilance. While security continues to improve, the threat will always be with us. Like its safety counterpart, the Universal Security Audit Programme has led to significant advances and a few weeks ago, the Aviation Security Panel completed its work on effectively handling emerging threats through the development of appropriate countermeasures. These must balance affordability, effectiveness and speed, while emphasizing worldwide harmonization.

The two other items on your agenda are air navigation and the establishment of regional management mechanisms. As you discuss these items in detail over the next three days, I would like to suggest that you consider them within the context of the dramatic changes that have taken place within the past year. In a few words, the global financial crisis has caused a number of airlines to disappear, others to file for bankruptcy, and most to reduce their operations in the face of diminishing traffic, revenues and yields. The ripple effect on all major stakeholders, from aircraft manufacturers to service providers, has been considerable around the world. The same is true for much of this Region.

The air transport industry, however, has always been resilient and will once again pull through. According to our latest estimate, recovery for the global industry should come in 2010. For Latin America and the Caribbean, the long-term prospect is for overall passenger traffic, from and within the Region, to grow at an average annual rate of 6.6 percent until the year 2027. This would mean 420 million passengers a year at that time.

As we move in that direction, our focus should be on ensuring that the recovery is solid and that effective measures are taken to improve the efficiency of the air transport system. One of the most effective ways to do this is the early implementation of Performance-based Navigation.

As many of you know, Performance-based Navigation, or PBN, involves a major shift from conventional ground-based navigation aids and procedures to satellite-based navigation aids and area navigation procedures. Performance-based Navigation is more accurate and makes it possible to establish clear performance requirements, leading to shorter, more direct routes between two given points, as well as more efficient take-offs and landings. This reduces fuel burn, airport and airspace congestion, and aircraft emissions of greenhouse gases. In short, PBN contributes to further improving the safety, efficiency and sustainability of the global air transport system.

The sooner we implement PBN, the sooner we will reap its enormous benefits. This was recognized by the 36th Session of the ICAO Assembly in 2007 when it urged all Member States of the Organization to have PBN implementation plans ready by 2009.

At a ceremony on April 1st, in Geneva, major players of the air transport industry signed a Declaration supporting the timely, systematic and harmonized implementation of PBN around the world. In my message to the Group, I emphasized that ICAO is totally committed to the global initiative and is helping make it happen. The PBN concept is clearly outlined in the ICAO Performance-based Navigation Manual and a coordinated action plan to assist States in the implementation of PBN according to ICAO criteria is now available. All ICAO Regional Offices have established PBN task forces with participation from States and a Global PBN Task Force, made up of States and industry partners, is addressing many of the issues associated with PBN implementation.

I also pointed out that the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) of the United States and the European SESAR future air navigation systems are both based on the application of PBN and support the ICAO Global Air Navigation Plan to ensure global harmonization and standardization.

But again I insist, we must act quickly and decisively. That is why I urge all ICAO Member States in this Region to move with diligence in their PBN implementation plans.

Another fundamental way to strengthen the air transport system is to move ahead in a concerted and cooperative manner, through regional organizations and regional integration.

The wisdom of this strategy was clearly outlined at a Symposium on Regional Organizations held one year ago at ICAO in Montreal. The Symposium concluded that regional organizations are a positive reality and that there is a trend towards more regional governance.

Regional organizations allow for the pooling of resources and the reduction of costs, a crucial factor now given the demanding conditions we are facing. Their advantages are most evident in the area of safety oversight, but can also be achieved in other areas, such as the provision of air navigation services, security or environmental policy.

Regional organizations also facilitate the process of liberalization by favouring the converging of existing rules, the development of common rules, or even the creation of a regional regulatory framework. Regional integration can provide more flexibility in dealing with issues such as ownership and control, a factor hampering the development of civil aviation on a global scale.

Finally, the wider international civil aviation community also gains from the development of common rules within regional organizations and the greater harmonization of standards and regulations they achieve.

ICAO fully supports regional organizations as well as regional integration and has taken action on a number of recommendations made by the Symposium. This includes developing guidance and assistance in managing the different functions and responsibilities of regional organizations, cooperative agreements between ICAO and regional organizations, and promoting systematic dialogue between ICAO and regional organizations.

Regional cooperation is also made easier through ICAO's network of Regional Offices. Cooperation between Regional Offices and Member States has led to remarkable achievements all over the world and the South American Region is certainly no exception. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the excellent cooperation of GREPECAS, the Pan American Regional Aviation Safety Group and the Latin American Civil Aviation Commission for their commitment to regional cooperation. Working together is more critical than ever to avoid duplication of effort and to increase our collective effectiveness. If we understand and appreciate the complementary role of each body and their function, we can better promote ICAO provisions and policies, for the good of everyone.

The Council of ICAO has long recognized the valuable contribution of Regional Offices to the work of the Organization. In 2008, it undertook a survey of Member States in order to assess the level of appreciation of their work. The objective was also to ensure that Regional Offices had the tools they needed to carry out their mission. I am delighted to report that our Member States are very satisfied with the overall assistance they receive from Regional Offices and are fully supportive of efforts to improve their capabilities. The report on the study of the Regional Offices will be presented to the Council in June of this year and preliminary indications are for strengthening the Regional Programme. This augurs well for the future of air transport here and in other Regions.

Ladies and gentlemen, on 7 December of this year, ICAO will celebrate its 65th Anniversary. Since the signing of the *Convention on International Civil Aviation* in 1944, the role and status of Regional Offices has grown considerably. Today, they constitute an essential mechanism for assisting Member States in implementing the principles, policies and provisions of the Convention and its 18 Annexes. They have also demonstrated how regional cooperation and integration can address the most difficult challenges.

My wish is that regional cooperation flourishes in this Region so that all of its inhabitants can count on a safe, secure, sustainable and efficient air transport system for many years to come.