



**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION (ICAO),
MR. ROBERTO KOBEH GONZÁLEZ,
TO THE FIFTH SYMPOSIUM AND EXHIBITION ON ICAO MACHINE READABLE
TRAVEL DOCUMENTS (MRTDs), BIOMETRICS AND SECURITY STANDARDS**

(Montreal, 21 September 2009)

It is a pleasure for me to welcome so many senior government officials and industry representatives to our fifth Symposium on ICAO MRTDs.

Both Mr. Raymond Benjamin, our new Secretary General, who is currently attending a high-level meeting in New York, and I are highly appreciative of the support and contribution of stakeholders you represent in the global effort to promote the development and harmonized implementation of MRTDs around the world.

We are launching something new this year, an undertaking we call ICAO's MRTD Vision 2020. Vision 2020 is above all a consultative process designed to gather and analyse the needs and wishes of Member States in relation to travel documents and border control in the future. We want to be able to adequately respond to them by putting into place, by the year 2020, the necessary policies, standards and related instruments. With your help, we want to begin the process at this year's Symposium. As Peter Drucker, the pre-eminent management expert once said – "The best way to predict the future is to create it".

This is what this symposium is all about – a dynamic forum for presenting and generating ideas and concepts that will shape the future of document control as it applies to aviation security and the efficient movement of passengers through airports. It was conceived in response to questions and concerns of States in meeting the 2010 deadline for the issuance of Machine Readable Passports. It quickly extended to the application of the impact of new technologies and high-profile issues such as the protection and prevention of identity fraud.

I am particularly pleased that the Secretary General of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), Mr. Ronald Noble, was able to take time out of his extremely busy schedule to speak to us today. I would like to personally thank him for the role played by his Organization over the years in supporting international cooperation in the field of identity management and travel document security.

This collaborative effort reflects the fact that the ICAO MRTD Programme, although developed in the frame of civil aviation matters, has an impact that goes beyond aviation security. It substantially contributes to establishing and implementing national and international security policies. It is also instrumental in combating terrorism and transborder crimes. In fact, the UN Security Council Resolution 1373, among other issues, mandates States to implement ICAO MRTD standards and specifications to achieve secure and integral issuance of travel documents, and avoid document and identity fraud at borders.

Also on the agenda are highly respected influencers in their particular fields of expertise that will help shape the future. This includes technological, political and economic dimensions of MRTDs. All of these points of views will become the building blocks of a security and facilitation environment that will provide ease of travel for passengers and more cost-effective operations for the industry. It will also make ICAO's job much easier and more productive.

Over the past two decades especially, ICAO has benefited from the intelligence and commitment of hundreds of contributing bodies and individuals in coordinating the complex mix of research, debate and ultimately solutions that have shaped the evolution of MRTDs. This in turn has made it possible for us to establish and adopt standards and technical specifications that have been incorporated by States into their national legislations in a seamless network of procedures on all continents.

Such is the power of global cooperation - from INTERPOL to the International Standards Organization (ISO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism of the Organization of American States, the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe and ICAO Member States. And, of course, all of you in this room as we embark on another phase of our journey with Vision 2020.

In closing, I also wish to thank the record number of exhibitors who will showcase the products and services that can expedite the handling of international passengers by all modes of transportation – whether road, rail, sea and air – through security, customs, immigration and other control points. We encourage you to take advantage of this one-stop consultation environment to familiarize yourselves with the tools you and your organizations may need to ensure the successful implementation of MRTD systems and procedures in your respective States. They too can feed the Vision 2020 process.

I wish you all a very stimulating and engaging Symposium.