



**Thank you message by the President of the Council of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González,
to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Honourable Lawrence Cannon, and to the
Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Honourable John Baird,
on the occasion of the Council visit to Ottawa**

(Ottawa, 12 January 2010)

Honourable Ministers, on behalf of my colleagues on the Council, the Secretary General and the Senior Executives of ICAO, I would like to thank you for your warm hospitality today and for having taken the initiative to host this visit. I would also like to thank the Representative of Canada on the Council, Mr. Alain Dupuis, for organizing this event. We are all delighted with this unique and informal exchange of views on how to pursue the excellent cooperation between Canada and ICAO, and on how we can keep working effectively together in addressing the enormous challenges that confront international civil aviation.

Minister Cannon alluded to a number of them in his remarks. Let me assure you Messrs. Ministers that ICAO is fully committed and ready to act on all of these challenges in a proactive and forceful manner. That is what the world wants to see and that is what we intend to do.

In March, a High-level Safety Conference will be shaping the future of aviation safety by formulating solutions to our most pressing issues. I personally expect the Conference to produce concrete and forward-looking proposals to the ICAO Assembly next September that will substantially improve the level of safety in air transport around the world. Our focus will be on how best to assess and promote the implementation of ICAO Standards within each of our Member States; how we can ensure a more widespread sharing of information among all parties – regulators, airlines, manufacturers and other aviation stakeholders; how we can better protect safety data from a legal perspective; and how we can enhance the harmonization of regulations worldwide. We will also look at safety issues arising from recent and still unexplained accidents – how can we adapt search and rescue operations to better protect and save lives; how can we recover vital operational data when black boxes cannot be found; and how can aircraft be designed to provide even greater levels of safety. As it has done so many times in the past, we will be looking to Canada to make a significant contribution to what will prove to be, I am sure, another historic conference.

As for security, the 25 December bombing attempt on Northwest Airlines flight 253 brought us back to the reality that air transport is always vulnerable to acts of unlawful interference and acts of terrorism. I wish to commend the Canadian government for its quick action in the hours and days which followed the incident. I also appreciate the understanding and patience of passengers in what was a very trying period. Immediately after the incident, contact was established between ICAO and States concerned. On 30 December, a message was sent to all members of the Aviation Security Point of Contact Network encouraging States to conduct a risk assessment and implement appropriate screening measures. Our objective in these and other meetings in the days and weeks to come is to assess this new threat, develop the appropriate responses, and ensure the global harmonization of measures that may be adopted. This is similar to the quick action we took within days of the attempted plot to blow up aircraft over the North Atlantic in August of 2006. The ICAO process eventually led to new standards for liquids and gels allowed in cabin baggage.

As you well know, ours is not an easy task. We must constantly strike a balance between the effectiveness of security measures and the need to facilitate the efficient flow of passengers through necessary security procedures. At the end of the day, we must both maintain public confidence in air travel and keep it as hassle free as possible. I believe that overall we have succeeded, but the challenge is always there.

On the environmental front, aviation has an enviable record in reducing the impact of noise and emissions from aircraft. As with safety and security, we know that it is a never-ending challenge, especially with regard to climate change. While aviation represents only 2 percent of total CO₂ produced from human activity, we are highly visible and that makes us an easy target for criticism. Perhaps we need to do a better job in promoting the achievements of aviation – that aircraft today are at least 70 percent more fuel efficient than the first generation of jet aircraft and that they are much quieter. Perhaps we also need to emphasize even more the enormous economic, social and cultural benefits of air transport.

The reality is that aviation has produced, under ICAO, the first and to date only globally harmonized agreement to address climate change from a sector. At a high-level meeting of States representing 93 percent of commercial air traffic last October, agreement was reached on how governments will further work together and with industry to reduce aviation's impact on climate change. This includes a global 2 percent annual improvement in fuel efficiency until the year 2050, a global CO₂ standard for aircraft, and a framework for market-based measures in international aviation. All of this and more reflects our collective commitment to reducing our carbon footprint in a systematic, comprehensive and unified fashion. My feeling is that Member States at the ICAO Assembly next fall will want to strengthen even more some of those measures.

I could elaborate further on the ICAO strategy for meeting aviation challenges in the future, but I will conclude my remarks by stressing that through cooperation and consensus, we can accomplish anything we set our minds to. Canada is a perfect example of this. Our host country for 65 years, Canada was built on consensus and it continues to promote this tradition in international affairs.

Messrs. Ministers, we look forward to the next Assembly beginning on 28 September when we can once again reciprocate the generosity and hospitality you have shown so many times before.