



**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION (ICAO),
MR. ROBERTO KOBEH GONZÁLEZ,
AT THE OPENING OF THE 37TH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY**

(Montréal, 28 September 2010)

I have the honour to declare open the 37th Session of the Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization. On behalf of the Council of ICAO, the Secretary General, Mr. Raymond Benjamin, and members of this Assembly, I extend a most warm welcome to our three distinguished guests: the Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, representing the Government of Canada; the Honourable Jean Charest, Premier of Quebec; and Mr. Gérald Tremblay, Mayor of the City of Montréal.

Ladies and gentlemen, this Assembly promises to be one of the most significant in years.

Consider the following.

Forty years from now, in 2050, there will be nine billion people on the planet, compared to 6.9 billion today. This is according to the United Nations Population Division.

Significantly, most of this growth will occur in developing countries and will undoubtedly generate a substantial increase in air transport activity.

Currently, our longest forecast goes to the year 2030 and shows passenger traffic growing at a rate of 4.6 per cent per year. From these figures, we can assume that the number of passengers could more than double to five billion passengers by then, compared to 2.3 billion today, and certainly increase even more by the middle of this century.

Progressively handling hundreds of millions of additional passengers will require huge investments in new aircraft, airports and air navigation facilities. It will mean training hundreds of thousands of aviation workers to manage and operate extraordinarily complex systems and technologies that have not yet been invented. And it will involve collaborating even more closely — States, industry and, yes, passengers — to maintain the integrity of the global air transport system as it grows to meet ever increasing demand.

My belief is that over the past three years since our last Assembly in 2007, we have made such progress that our achievements can be considered to have laid the basis for long-term strategies that can significantly impact the safety, security and sustainability of air travel for decades to come. Over the next few minutes, I would like to highlight our most significant accomplishments.

AVIATION SAFETY

I will begin with safety. When this Assembly met three years ago, the global accident rate was approximately four aircraft accidents per million departures, a remarkable achievement by any measure. The reality was that this rate of accidents had been relatively stable for years. If nothing was undertaken to bring it down, the number of accidents would eventually go up, in line with the coming increase in traffic.

Another reality was that two regions of the world had an accident rate which exceeded the world average by more than twice, precisely among the regions where the strongest growth in air traffic is expected in the coming years.

We realized that if we were to bring down both the global and regional accident rates, we would need to think and act differently. And we did!

At a High-level Safety Conference held this past March at ICAO, we proposed a far-sighted strategy, two years in the making. It was unanimously endorsed by 117 Member States and fully supported by 32 international organizations and industry partners in attendance.

Five key recommendations of the Conference capture the essence of the new strategy.

The first recommendation is for States to commit to sharing information regarding the performance of their respective safety oversight systems. This should help States identify deficiencies more quickly and efficiently, and to correct them more effectively by making it easier to allocate resources in a more targeted way.

The second recommendation supports this concept of transparency with the creation of an international mechanism for the sharing of safety information, based on globally-harmonized safety metrics and analysis methods.

In just a few minutes, outside this Assembly Hall, this project will come to life with the signing, by ICAO, the Federal Aviation Administration of the United States (FAA), the Commission of the European Union (EC) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA), of a Global Safety Information Exchange.

Still with sharing of information, the third recommendation would see the development of a code of conduct to ensure that the sensitive safety information is used only for the purpose of improving the safety of civil aviation. This protection is essential for the required information to flow freely and in a timely fashion, to ICAO and to other organizations involved.

The fourth recommendation reaffirms the productive role that regional safety oversight organizations can play in improving safety. In many cases, individual States do not possess the resources or the expertise to act alone in resolving safety concerns. Dedicated regional bodies are best suited to coordinate and align multiple safety initiatives by strategically leveraging expertise and resources of States concerned.

Finally, the fifth recommendation proposed the creation of a new Annex to the Chicago Convention — ICAO's charter — dedicated to safety management processes. This would reaffirm that safety is ICAO's primary focus and facilitate the promulgation of Standards and Recommended Practices, absolutely necessary to consistently achieve the highest levels of safety.

Overall then, the new safety strategy takes us from a largely reactive model to a predictive model, relying on a performance-based and results-oriented approach.

During this Assembly, you will be invited to review and endorse these and other proposals that will shape the long-term future of ICAO safety programmes.

AVIATION SECURITY

In the field of aviation security, we were similarly aggressive.

A recent catalyst, although by no means the primary motivator, was the attempted bombing of Northwest flight 253 on 25 December 2009.

Within hours, we were in contact with government agencies and industry partners involved. Together, we set the stage for concerted and coordinated action to deal more effectively with terrorist activities.

In the first half of 2010, four Ministerial-level Regional Aviation Security Conferences were held in Mexico City, Tokyo, Abuja and Abu Dhabi. Similar meetings involving senior State officials were held in Toledo and another with industry in Geneva. Attendees at these meetings reaffirmed the commitment of their countries to fight terrorism and emphasized the need to respond more effectively to new and emerging threats.

They made recommendations to broaden existing cooperation mechanisms among States and industry; utilize modern technologies to detect prohibited items, while respecting the privacy and safety of individuals; strengthen and promote travel document security; and seek to achieve both a high level of security and the efficient facilitation of passenger travel.

In March, our Aviation Security Panel produced its own recommendations to strengthen and support the ICAO Aviation Security Programme, including enhancements to international standards and recommended practices.

Over and above these reactive measures, however, this Assembly will have the opportunity to adopt a proactive, Comprehensive Aviation Security Strategy for the next six years, to succeed the Aviation Security Plan of Action that was adopted to deal with events of 11 September 2001.

This proposed strategy comprises seven focus areas: addressing new and existing threats; promoting innovative, effective and efficient security approaches; promoting the sharing of information amongst Member States; promoting global compliance and establishing the sustainable aviation security oversight capability of States; improving human factors and security culture; promoting the development of mutual recognition for aviation security processes; and emphasizing the importance of security amongst States and stakeholders.

As we know, aviation security is a moving target. Aircraft and air transport facilities have always been attractive targets to potential terrorists. That is why we must be forever vigilant and sensitive to all forms of new and emerging threats. Even when terrorists don't succeed, they can still destabilize the system and reduce public confidence in air travel. We must not let this happen.

On 10 September in Beijing, under the auspices of ICAO, a diplomatic conference adopted two international air law instruments for the suppression of unlawful acts relating to civil aviation.

The treaties further criminalize the act of using civil aircraft as a weapon and of using dangerous materials to attack aircraft or other targets on the ground. The unlawful transport of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons and their related material becomes now punishable and making a threat against civil aviation may also trigger criminal liability. The message is clear — any form of unlawful interference against civil aviation is not tolerable.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Let me now turn to environmental protection, where we also raised the bar on future expectations through our impressive progress.

A highlight of the triennium was the *Programme of Action on International Aviation and Climate Change* adopted at the High-level meeting of October 2009. States representing 93 per cent of global commercial traffic produced, with the support of industry, the first and to date only globally-harmonized agreement from a sector for addressing its CO₂ emissions. Highlights include:

- 1) a global goal of 2 per cent annual fuel efficiency improvement up to the year 2050;
- 2) an objective to develop a CO₂ certification standard for aircraft engines;
- 3) development of a framework for market-based measures in international aviation; and
- 4) further elaboration on measures to assist developing States and to facilitate access to financial resources, technology transfer and capacity building.

In February 2010, ICAO's Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP) committed to a timetable for the CO₂ standard, aiming at 2013. Once adopted, the standard will become the only global fuel-efficiency standard for any industry sector.

CAEP also recommended NO_x (Nitrogen Oxides) standards up to 15 per cent more stringent than the current levels, applicable to new aircraft engines certified after 31 December 2013.

Another milestone was the adoption, in November 2009, of a global framework on the development and deployment of sustainable alternative fuels for aviation. Alternative aviation drop-in fuels use existing aircraft and airport infrastructures. They can be produced from a wide variety of feed stocks, enabling many regions to be candidate production locations and placing aviation in a position to be the first sector to be able to use sustainable alternative fuels globally.

We look to this Assembly to offer guidance to the Organization as it pursues its efforts on three main areas: more ambitious environmental goals; the development and application of a framework of market-based measures; and measures to assist States.

Moreover, policies and recommendations from this Assembly will form the basis for aviation's input to the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP16) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2010, in Mexico.

EFFICIENCY

Beyond the safety, security and environmental sustainability aspects of aviation, great strides were made for improving the efficiency of air transport operations, in technological and operational terms. This in turn will make it possible to further reduce fuel burn, and hence emissions, lower the risks associated with accidents, and improve customer service.

One milestone initiative was the convening, for the first time in history, of a Global Air Traffic Management Forum on Civil/Military Cooperation. The objective was to foster awareness among the two airspace users of each other's needs and constraints, aiming at optimum use of all available airspace for operational requirements of air transportation, national defense and environmental conservation. An action plan was outlined in which ICAO would play a key role as the international platform for progress on civil/military cooperation.

Efficiency also means reacting quickly to keep aircraft flying safely in times of emergency. Here are two examples among many.

When the devastating earthquake struck Haiti on 12 January of this year, we immediately sprang into action to ensure the safety of the airspace in and around Haiti, through our Regional Office in Mexico and in cooperation with Member States in the Region. We are now helping with plans for the rehabilitation of the civil aviation infrastructure in the country.

The eruption of a volcano in Iceland in April was the first time that a volcanic disruption of this magnitude had impacted such a densely utilized airspace. Members of the ICAO Council met together with IATA only two days after the eruption to review the situation, while the following day ICAO's Air Navigation Commission (ANC) considered near-term initiatives to advance the science of aviation safety in airspace contaminated by volcanic ash. ICAO established a new International Volcanic Ash Task Force (IVATF) that is hard at work on a global safety risk management framework associated with volcanic ash events, with the objective of being better prepared for a similar event should it occur.

CONCLUSION

So there you have it ladies and gentlemen — a triennium marked by solid achievements and future-oriented policies and programmes, as outlined in the Annual Reports of the Council of the past three years.

The point is that they all constitute potential building blocks for long-term strategies that can ensure the safe and orderly development of civil aviation for decades to come. As we move ahead in time, we will need to adjust and modify them, yet they capture the fundamental principles that are essential to safe, secure and sustainable air transport operations, now and in the future.

If the past three years were the launching pad to 2050, your challenge for the next two weeks is to design and approve the flight plan that will get us to the next stage.

When you return to Montréal for the 38th Session of the Assembly, I hope that the aviation community will have evolved to the point of being able to say the following:

In safety, we have made significant progress in diagnosing emerging safety issues, providing regulators and industry parties with the information they need to mitigate safety risks before they result in accidents.

In security, our actions now reflect the full understanding that, in an aviation security environment that is constantly changing, we must maintain a global aviation security mindset which strives for continuous improvement, supported by determined political will and the full engagement of all States and industry.

In environmental protection, we have adopted a CO₂ standard for aircraft engines and we are unequivocally committed to reaching goals that are in line with the demands of a society determined to achieve carbon neutrality.

And finally, that we have definitely set into motion the systems and programmes that will promote the highest levels of efficiency in all aspects of international civil aviation for decades to come.

I thank you for your attention and I wish us all a very successful Assembly.