



**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL
OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION (ICAO),
MR. ROBERTO KOBEH GONZÁLEZ, AT A CEREMONY FOR THE PRESENTATION OF
THE THIRTY-NINTH EDWARD WARNER AWARD BESTOWED ON
PROF. DR. NICOLAS MATEESCO MATTE**

(Montréal, 28 September 2010)

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to a most memorable evening.

The ICAO triennial Assembly like the one which opened today brings together representatives of Member States of the Organization and major stakeholders of the world aviation community. It is an ideal setting for presenting the Edward Warner Award, the highest distinction that can be bestowed on an individual or an institution for the advancement of international civil aviation.

This award is named for Dr. Edward Warner, the first President of the Council of ICAO. An exceptional man of vision, Dr. Warner strongly believed in the positive contribution that civil aviation could make in fostering peace and cooperation among the peoples of the world.

The recipient of the 39th Edward Warner Award certainly mirrors the passion, dedication and commitment that Dr. Warner brought to the task of building a global organization dedicated to the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation.

On behalf of the Council of ICAO, it is my deep privilege to present the Edward Warner Award to Dr. Nicolas Mateesco Matte, in recognition of his eminent contribution to the development, promotion and understanding of air and space law.

Dr. Matte has led a long and fascinating life. Born in Romania in 1913, he seemed destined to a prolific career in the legal field. It began when he obtained his first doctorate of law from the University of Bucharest in 1939. After World War II, he moved to Paris where he obtained a doctorate of international law from the *Université de Paris*. That was in 1947, the year the Chicago Convention entered into force. This may have been prophetic, a fortunate coincidence that was to usher him into the wonderful world of aviation.

The transition actually took place in 1951, one year after he had moved to Montreal. His writings at the time had already made him well known as a proponent of a new international legal order.

At the urging of John Cobb Cooper, the founder of the McGill Institute of Air and Space Law, Dr. Matte occupied the chair of Air Law at the University of Montreal, which later became the chair of Air and Space Law. Ten years later, in 1961, Dr. Matte became visiting professor at McGill's Institute of Air and Space Law, all the while continuing to teach at the University of Montreal until 1969.

In 1974, he was named Research Director of the McGill Institute of Air and Space Law, and in 1975 he became Director of the Institute and Centre for Research of Air and Space Law. As soon as he was appointed, he founded the “Annals of Air and Space Law”, and remained its editor in chief for 15 years. In the preface to the first issue of the Annals, Dr. Matte laid out his vision for the publication, and I quote:

“We trust that the Annals answers to a real need for a scientific and objective publication where one will find confrontations of ideas about existing air and space legislation, suggestions on how to solve emerging law from new techniques and useful information about structural and doctrinal developments.”

The sharing of information and views, sometimes provocative, remains to this day the most effective way to move forward in addressing the legal challenges that confront civil aviation and indeed our global society in this still early part of the 21st century. In this sense, Dr. Matte like Dr. Warner was a man of vision who knew not only how to share his wisdom, but how to give birth to new ways of looking at aviation and at life. One can just imagine the stimulating conversations these two men must have had, located as they were just a few hundred meters away from each other.

During his entire professorship, Dr. Matte contributed tirelessly to the growth and financial stability of the McGill Institute, laying the groundwork for what has become a centre of excellence of worldwide reputation. Dr. Matte enjoys the well-deserved title of Director Emeritus of the Institute.

Fortunately for us, such men never retire. At 97, Dr. Matte continues to work, to travel and to dispense his knowledge and experience with generosity and conviction. Just as he was teacher, advisor and mentor to all those who walked the halls of universities and institutions where he taught, including the *Institut international d'études et de recherches diplomatiques de Paris* in the late 1940s, he continues to play these roles in the tenth decade of his life to his many colleagues and former students.

The true value of these achievements can be measured by the prestigious awards he has received nationally and internationally for his many contributions to the well-being of people at home and abroad. These include – the Order of Canada, *Chevalier de l'Ordre du Québec*, Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and *Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur* of France, to name but a few. Dr. Matte took silk as a Queen's Counsel in 1971.

Of all of these awards and titles, one is most fascinating. It was an award from the International Institute of Space Law of the International Astronautical Federation and it saluted his leadership and distinguished contribution to the law of outer space. That was in 1978, some 32 years ago. This again shows how much a man of vision is Dr. Matte and how contemporary his ideas remain.

One day soon, the world will need to create a legal and regulatory framework for commercial flights in sub-orbital space and no doubt that the writings of Dr. Matte will prove once again of immense benefit to deliberations in a forum like ICAO.

The same can be true for his myriad other achievements. Through his invaluable research, publications, teachings and other academic and professional activities, he contributed to the development of law for a large part at its inception, in the perspective of cooperation amongst States.

The Edward Warner Award, which I have the honour to present to Dr. Matte on behalf of the Council of ICAO, consists of a medal and a diploma. The citation accompanying the Award reads as follows:

EDWARD WARNER AWARD

conferred by the Council
of the
International Civil Aviation Organization
on

Prof. Dr. Nicolas Mateesco Matte

in recognition of his eminent contribution to the
development of international civil aviation in the
field of air law.

Throughout his distinguished academic career, he has contributed to the development and better knowledge of international air law.

His deep commitment to his work and assiduous efforts have led to major achievements, including the founding of the Annals of Air and Space Law and the expansion of the McGill University Institute of Air and Space Law which has educated generations of air and space law experts and made it an internationally recognized academic centre.

His wide knowledge of and dedication to international air law have benefited civil aviation throughout the world and gained him the well-deserved respect and consideration of the civil aviation community globally and, in particular, the air law community.