



**Address by the President of the Council of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González,
to the Diplomatic Conference on Aviation Security**

(Beijing, China - 30 August 2010)

It is an honour and a privilege for me to declare open the Diplomatic Conference on Aviation Security. I now have the pleasure of inviting Vice-Premier of the State Council of China, Mr. Zhang Dejiang, to address the Conference.

(Speech of the Vice-Premier)

Thank you, Mr. Vice-Premier, for your speech. Now, I would invite the Administrator of the Civil Aviation Administration of China, Mr. Minister Li Jiaxiang, to address the Conference.

(Speech of the Administrator)

Thank you, Mr. Minister for your speech. Now, I would invite the Vice Mayor of Beijing, Mr. Huang Wei, to address the Conference.

(Speech of the Vice Mayor)

Thank you.

Honourable Vice-Premier, Minister and Vice Mayor, I wish to thank you for your opening speeches. On behalf of the ICAO Council and the Secretary General, Mr. Raymond Benjamin, and all delegates and observers present here, I wish to extend to you, and through you, to the Government of the People's Republic of China, our most sincere thanks and deepest appreciation for your generosity in hosting this important event, which I have no doubt will largely contribute to its success.

Aviation security has been one of the highest priorities of ICAO. Under its auspices, five international treaties have been adopted and almost universally accepted. The abhorrent attacks on 11 September 2001 have demonstrated that civil aviation has been, and remains, a primary target of terrorism. As an immediate response to these attacks, the 33rd Session of the ICAO Assembly adopted Resolution A33-1 directing the Council and the Secretary General to review the adequacy of the existing aviation security conventions. Pursuant to this Resolution, the Secretariat undertook a study and drew a preliminary conclusion that the existing conventions could be updated in several aspects in order to cover new and emerging threats. This conclusion was endorsed by 84 States through a survey in 2005 and by the Secretariat Study Group on Aviation Security Conventions. Based on these results and taking into account the law making processes in other *fora* of the United Nations

system, the ICAO Legal Committee established a Special Sub-Committee in 2007 and appointed Ms. Julie Atwell from Australia as Rapporteur to assist its work. Under the chairmanship of Mr. Terry Olson from France, the Sub-Committee reached broad consensus on a number of issues, including the criminalization of certain acts, such as the act of using civil aircraft in service as a weapon, and the act of using certain dangerous materials or substances to attack aircraft or other targets on the ground. It had also been agreed to explicitly specify the criminal responsibility of the directors and organizers of the offences set forth by the Conventions. Moreover, a new notion has also emerged concerning the criminalization of a credible threat to commit an offence listed in the Conventions. Finally, based on the most recent UN counter-terrorism instruments, provisions relating in particular to non-discrimination, exclusion of the political offence exception, and additional jurisdictional grounds had been introduced. On the basis of the drafts prepared by the Sub-Committee, the 34th Session of the Legal Committee, chaired by Mr. Michael Jennison from the United States, further refined the texts and considered them to be sufficiently mature to be submitted to a diplomatic conference. Subsequently, the Council decided to convene this Conference.

Accordingly, after several years of preparation, we have come to this historical moment to modernize our aviation security conventions. This Conference, composed of plenipotentiary representatives from States, is the final phase for the adoption of international legal instruments. I realize that one or two sensitive issues still require further deliberation during this Conference, such as the issue concerning the transport of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons, commonly known as BCN weapons, and their related material. The current draft texts can probably be improved. However, as often said, “The best is the enemy of the good”. We must try to accommodate the differences. We are here to seek common ground, not to create divergence. I therefore appeal to all of you to work in the spirit of cooperation and compromise, with a view to adopting legal instruments as widely acceptable as possible. We need to send a clear message to the international community, and to terrorist groups, that any unlawful interference against civil aviation is not tolerable. Not only is it important that this Conference can adopt legal instruments, it is equally important that these instruments be ratified in a short time by a significant number of States.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you have a crucial task before you, which represents great significance in the combat against terrorism. The international community in general and the ICAO Council in particular, have high expectations on the outcome of this Conference. Let’s work together, in the place where the ancient Great Wall was built, to construct a modern great wall to safeguard international civil aviation.

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