



**Opening address by the President of the Council of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González,
on the occasion of the inauguration of the new facilities of the
Central American Agency for Aviation Safety (ACSA)**

(Alajuela, Costa Rica – 14 April 2011)

It is an honour for me to share a few thoughts on the inauguration of the new home for the Central American Agency for Aviation Safety (ACSA) in this beautiful city of Alajuela. This is also an opportunity for me to recognize the Central American Corporation for Air Navigation Services (COCESNA) for hosting this event and for its essential role in the creation and evolution of ACSA.

From its birth in 2000, ACSA has evolved into a leader in the provision of aviation safety services in Central America and one of the most robust Regional Safety Oversight Organizations in the world.

I would say that ACSA corresponds very well to the ICAO definition of what a Regional Safety Oversight Organization should do – ensure that the aviation industry in each Member State operates according to the internationally prescribed ICAO Standards, make available a full range of technical expertise and capabilities, and generate sustained political support.

In just over a decade, ACSA has demonstrated its ability to carry out a wide range of functions essential to aviation safety in Central America, including:

- sharing basic aeronautical legislation to support the application of regulations by States;
- implementing a regionally-harmonized regulatory framework in line with the nature and complexity of the industry in Member States;
- training in various fields of expertise for civil aviation authority personnel;
- maintaining a permanent oversight system to ensure that the aviation industry is operating under effective surveillance programmes; and
- assisting Member States during safety and security ICAO audit missions, as well as in the development of related action plans of every COCESNA Member State.

Having been closely associated with civil aviation in Central America for many years, I know that none of these remarkable achievements would have been possible without the unfailing support of the COCESNA Board of Directors. By making available the necessary resources, it made it possible for ACSA to provide COCESNA Member States with the advice, guidance and assistance for them to fulfill their obligations under the Chicago Convention, while at the same time responding to the myriad challenges emanating from a dynamic and rapidly growing aviation sector throughout the Central American Region.

On this aspect, I want to stress the critical importance for COCESNA Member States to implement State Safety Programmes and for their respective service providers to likewise implement Safety Management Systems. Safety management must be reflected throughout government and industry organizations if we are to consistently raise the level of aviation safety in the Region. Equally important is the initiative to establish a regional accident investigation agency. Here again, the role of ACSA is paramount.

As I alluded to a few moments ago, the reputation of ACSA extends beyond the borders of Central America.

A good example of this is the involvement of the Agency, in close coordination with the ICAO Regional Office in Mexico, with the Regional Aviation Safety Group/Pan America (RASG-PA) in developing model legislation for the protection of safety information.

Moreover, its productive partnership with organizations such as ICAO, the Federal Aviation Administration in the United States, the European Aviation Safety Agency and many others has enhanced both the effectiveness and prestige of ACSA around the world. It has inspired other regional initiatives around the world to follow in its footsteps. For many, it has become a role model.

Because of this reputation, the eyes of many States in different regions are on ACSA. Success brings responsibility, a responsibility for the Board of Directors to support and strengthen ACSA's functions in the short, medium and long term.

I am confident that COCESNA will rise to the challenge.

It has a long tradition of doing just that. In 1976, ICAO bestowed upon COCESNA the Edward Warner Award, the highest distinction in international civil aviation. The award singled out COCESNA's "contribution in the provision of efficient and coordinated services for air navigation and communications, which has remarkably increased the safety of international flights in the Central American region".

That is the legacy and vision of COCESNA that can inspire ACSA in pursuing its mission at home and, in this way, remaining a regional model for the world to follow in pursuing a global effort to improve aviation safety.