



**Opening remarks by the President of the Council of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González,
to the Symposium on Regional Safety Oversight Organizations (RSOOs)**

(Montréal – 26 October 2011)

I am delighted to personally welcome you to this Symposium on Regional Safety Oversight Organizations.

The objective of this Symposium is for us to share the expertise we have gained to date in the establishment and management of RSOOs and to map out a strategy so that all Regions can benefit from the application of this concept to enhance their respective safety oversight functions and systems.

Underlying the purpose of this meeting is the fact that a safe and efficient air transport system provides an essential link to the global marketplace. It supports economic development, creates jobs and contributes to the overall social and cultural development. A solid safety record makes it possible for carriers of any State to fly anywhere else around the world.

As we know, however, a number of States do not have the volume and scope of aviation activities to generate the resources necessary for putting into place and maintain at peak efficiency a workable safety oversight infrastructure.

In such cases, a Regional Safety Oversight Organization can give access to the expertise required through the sharing and pooling of resources, in order to implement and consistently comply with the ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices for safety.

These advantages are evident for smaller or developing States, but can equally apply to bigger and more developed States to harmonize safety regulations and requirements in any one region.

In short, our experience with Regional Safety Oversight Organizations is that they can definitely be an effective means of assisting States in discharging their safety oversight responsibilities, including the Continuous Monitoring Approach, while at the same time addressing their regional challenges and needs. All of this, in a cost-effective and harmonized manner.

What is important is that RSOOs meet the specific requirements of States. That is why the concept is flexible and can be adapted to the particular circumstances, stages of development and anticipated demands on their respective air transport systems.

I emphasize that this is not a “one size fits all” proposition. The format may and does differ from one State or Region to another. Existing bodies may play the role of an RSOO or may be transformed to fit a particular context. In the end, they must all respond to the safety objectives of the States or Regions concerned.

As critical, they must meet the fundamental criteria of an organizational body with a clear institutional structure, mandate, operating requirements and resources.

How we get there is what this Symposium is about. It is an opportunity to share experiences, to see how we can help each other and how we can move forward in the most efficient way. At the same time, it is extremely important that this Symposium must be results-oriented. By that, I mean we want the discussions here to result in real outcomes that can be used to chart the course of actions aimed at establishing effective RSOOs which are capable of bringing real safety benefits to their Member States and their respective Regions.

We have structured the Symposium as a forum for the free exchange of ideas where we discuss problems and solutions in an open and transparent manner. It is a unique opportunity to enter into a dialogue that transcends your respective States and Regions.

It is also a timely event. RSOO implementation has attained such a degree of maturity as to provide a solid base of best practices and models for establishing new bodies or transforming existing ones.

In this process, ICAO is committed to doing all it can to support the RSOO effort, to help develop and apply solutions to help eliminate all of the roadblocks that stand in the way of an efficient, well-organized and performance-based RSOO that delivers on safety.

That is why we are looking for feedback during this Symposium. In addition to the various presentations, we will collect the outcomes of the Symposium for further improving the guidance material we have in the new, second edition of the ICAO Manual on *The Establishment and Management of a Regional Safety Oversight Organization*.

We want you to have the best tools available for more easily and more quickly upgrading or developing your respective RSOOs. We therefore intend the new guidance material to include more effective ways for managing RSOOs and the design of new funding mechanisms capable of sustaining the long-term operation of the RSOO.

I would conclude my brief remarks by saying that at the heart of the RSOO concept is ICAO's fundamental principle of cooperation. The global air transport system as we know it today was built on cooperation among Member States. In recent years, the emphasis has been on promoting partnerships between States and regional bodies, whether political or economic, as well as with industry, where much of the expertise resides. Always, the result is to provide users with the safest and most efficient mode of transportation possible.

In this spirit, I urge you to make the most of this event.