



**Address by the President of the Council of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González,
to the Ministerial Meeting held during the
Second Session of the African Union Conference of Ministers responsible for Transport
(Luanda, Angola - 24 November 2011)**

It is a pleasure for me to join you for this high-level ministerial meeting on the future of transportation on the African continent.

When we consider air transport specifically, the future is promising.

Between 2000 and 2010, the number of air carriers in Africa went from 325 to 431, a 33 per cent increase, while the total number of aircraft increased by 49 per cent, from 1 282 to 1 908.

This progression is truly impressive, yet air transport operations on the continent remain relatively small, at around three per cent of global passenger traffic. Still, air transport in Africa holds tremendous potential for growth, with enormous benefits in terms of economic and social development.

The challenge, your challenge, lies in bridging the gap between the realities of today and the promises of tomorrow.

Part of the solution lies in the progressive, systematic and harmonized liberalization of air transport throughout Africa, as intended by the Yamoussoukro Decision of 1999.

During ICAO's Assembly last year, 53 African States, Members of the African Civil Aviation Commission, called on the Council for assistance in the implementation of the Decision. They suggested that ICAO develop guidelines on liberalization to ensure worldwide uniformity and applicability, including guidance related to dispute settlement mechanisms.

This will be given serious consideration at the Sixth Worldwide Air Transport Conference to be held in 2013. Among the key issues that will be examined are the avoidance of unfair competitive practices, the impact of industry consolidation and alliances, as well as the compatibility or harmonization in the application of competition rules. The active participation of African States will ensure that your specific concerns and needs are addressed and solutions discussed.

As Africa moves towards liberalization, it must imperatively focus on improving the level of aviation safety. Of the 121 accidents worldwide last year, 17 were in Africa, 3 of them being fatal accidents. What makes this more acute is that Africa has the lowest percentage of scheduled commercial traffic at 3 per cent of global traffic volume.

ICAO is committed to helping Member States improve safety and makes available a number of programmes and activities that together can significantly reduce the number of accidents and serious incidents. More recently, I communicated directly with most of you to indicate ICAO's readiness to work together in addressing the safety deficiencies identified by the ICAO safety audits. I also indicated that the Regional Directors accredited to your respective State would get in touch with you to agree on the actions we can undertake together — States, ICAO, and our international partners. I know that they have already been in touch with some of you and presented plans of actions tailored to the needs and situation of nine States in Africa. They are here today and I hope you will all seize the opportunity to interact and make progress.

ICAO has a special focus on Africa this triennium, but let me caution you, this will not always be the case. So I urge you to take advantage of this special attention at this moment and work with us to improve your safety oversight capability. Aviation is one of the most important engines of your economies.

As we develop initiatives to improve safety, we shall keep in mind that many States in Africa, as in other parts of the world, do not have the volume and scope of aviation activities to generate the resources necessary to put in place and maintain safety programmes and activities.

ICAO is strongly encouraging the pooling and sharing of resources on a regional basis, in order to implement and consistently comply with internationally-recognized safety regulations and practices, based on ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices. Again, let me leave you with a word of caution. You can, and should, work together to address safety. You can delegate the inspection and monitoring action; but you cannot delegate the responsibility. The responsibility remains with the regulator.

Our experience with the regional cooperative approach in other regions of the world is that it works in addressing jointly safety concerns in a cost-effective and harmonized manner that a State is not able to address alone.

What is absolutely critical is that any regional structure that is established must meet the fundamental criteria of an organizational body – with a clear institutional structure, mandate, operating requirements and particularly resources. And lastly, a State must choose to cooperate in only one safety regional grouping. Without these conditions, progress will be much harder to achieve.

In your deliberations at this meeting, I encourage you to take this concept into consideration.

Regional cooperation is also the key to dealing with terrorist threats.

In 2010, a series of ministerial-level regional aviation security conferences, one of them hosted by Nigeria, led to the development of a Declaration on Aviation Security. The Declaration was adopted unanimously by the 37th Session of the ICAO Assembly in October as a universal commitment to collective and proactive action.

In the same way, a new round of regional aviation security conferences this year and next will support the implementation of the Assembly Declaration.

One of these conferences was held in Dakar recently. The participating 35 African States reaffirmed the continuing relevance of the African Roadmap and they called on ICAO to work with the African Civil Aviation Commission to further develop the Roadmap, in line with the global priorities of the Declaration.

They further acknowledged the need for information sharing and agreed on greater transparency in ICAO audits to make assistance efforts more effective. This ties in with ICAO's new strategy that focuses on addressing security shortcomings on a priority basis, allocating resources and attention to States with the greatest need.

The regional conferences like the one in Dakar are an important step towards achieving consensus at the High-level Conference on Aviation Security scheduled for September 2012.

ICAO will also be working closely with African States in the implementation of Assembly Resolution A37-19, largely related to climate change. One of the more concrete measures of the Resolution is the voluntary submission of Member States' action plans to ICAO. These plans will help States identify specific measures they can take and the assistance they require.

ICAO has already developed guidance material and an interactive website to assist States in submitting their plans by the June 2012 deadline. We have also held a number of hands-on training workshops, including one for African Member States held in Nairobi this past July.

In summary, ICAO is ready to work with African States and its regional institutions on the issues that are on your agenda for this meeting: air transport liberalization, safety, security, and environment. The Regional Offices accredited to your State are available to work with each and every State and Regional Groupings to develop and implement coherent and comprehensive programmes to address all of these issues. But this special focus has a limited window of time, so I urge you once more to seize this unique opportunity for collaboration.