



**Opening address by the President of the Council of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González,
to the Singapore Airshow Aviation Leadership Summit**

(Singapore – 13 February 2012)

It is truly a pleasure for me to once again take part in the Singapore Airshow Aviation Leadership Summit.

I would like to thank the Government of Singapore for kindly inviting me to address this Summit on key issues and challenges facing civil aviation.

As we meet here today, the aviation sector faces perhaps the greatest challenge in its history. To many outside observers, this statement might seem exaggerated.

After all, the global air transport system is remarkably efficient.

It is as safe as it has ever been and 2011 was the safest year on record.

Since the events of 11 September 2001, it is also very secure. We can better anticipate, detect, intercept and protect against terrorist attacks – and we can also respond more appropriately when attacks occur.

As for protecting the environment, today's aircraft are at least 70 per cent more fuel efficient than during the 1960s and much quieter.

I am sure that many sectors of our global economy would be envious of such a track record and yet, we must do better – much better.

By 2030, the number of passengers will reach 6 billion a year on scheduled services alone; roughly double what they are today. The number of aircraft departures will also double to well over 50 million a year.

By the middle of the century, the population of the world is expected to be 9 billion. One can only imagine what the demand for air travel will be by then.

The pressure on the air transport system will be tremendous – for airlines, airports, air navigation service providers, maintenance facilities and for personnel needed to operate the systems.

We can sum up the challenge in one word: growth. More planes carrying more people to more destinations, year after year, in an ever-increasing spiral.

So the questions become: what must we do as a community to make aviation even safer, more secure and more environmentally friendly? As critical, how do we ensure the sustainable development of air transport?

For without a healthy industry, the world cannot continue to enjoy the enormous economic, social and humanitarian benefits it has come to expect and depend on from air travel.

Let me suggest that part of the answer lies in a special moment in time that brings us back to the very early days of aviation.

The place was Chicago and the year was 1944. Representatives from 52 nations met to create a global regulatory framework for an industry that did not yet exist but that was foreseen to have the potential of affecting the lives of every man, woman and child on the planet.

In the space of three short weeks, the *Convention on International Civil Aviation* was drafted and signed.

This was perhaps the greatest driver for change our sector has ever known.

With the stroke of a pen, the Convention set into motion an irreversible transformation of the global economy and gave birth to what we now routinely call our global village.

By adhering to one of the most visionary legal documents of the 20th century, States commit to putting into place the technical, operational and regulatory requirements that to this day maintain strong the safest and most efficient mode of mass transportation ever created.

Two fundamental principles of the Chicago Convention are captured in the theme of the Conference that brings us here today – *driving change and overcoming challenges together*.

A global air transport system can only work efficiently and effectively through total and sustained cooperation among all stakeholders. There is no way around it. We are destined to work together.

Through the years, powerful drivers of change demanded that we make good on our commitment to work together. And we did.

We developed new technologies that made air travel more efficient, safer and more environmentally-friendly.

We democratized air travel and made sure that more and more people would be able to visit family and friends, enjoy vacations abroad, stimulate the travel and tourism industries, and conduct business anywhere in the world.

We met the terrorist threat head-on and we are continually seeking new ways to protect the lives of people in the air and on the ground.

And we are pursuing our drive to protect the environment.

We have been successful in addressing any and all challenges because we increasingly worked together. In the same way, increased levels of cooperation will ensure that we succeed in the future.

At ICAO, we are applying this principle to all of our activities, in a proactive and comprehensive manner, towards present and future challenges.

With our industry partners, we are focussing our collective efforts on those areas with the greatest return on investment of resources.

In safety, we want to raise awareness and bring the industry's valuable expertise, knowledge and best practices to bear on runway safety-related events, the number one cause of fatal accidents. We are partnering with key regulators to tackle loss of control in flight and fatigue, two other important causes of sometimes catastrophic fatal accidents.

With IATA, ACI and CANSO, we are developing an overarching aviation mechanism of systems assessments involving airlines, airports and air navigation service providers. All three organizations have agreed to the sharing of relevant information through the ICAO Global Safety Information Exchange. As this network expands, more lives will be saved.

The modernization of national aviation infrastructures will see ICAO States invest more than 120 billion dollars over the next ten years. Our aim is to continue to foster international harmonization of air navigation system upgrades underway by the United States in the form of NextGen and the European Community in the form of SESAR. This will have a ripple effect throughout the global air navigation infrastructure.

If left unchecked, terrorism could grow as more and more people flow through already congested airports and border crossings. States and industry stakeholders have a vested interest in working together to reinforce a global web of effective national and regional security regimes.

A Declaration on Aviation Security adopted unanimously by the 2010 ICAO Assembly reaffirmed the commitment of States to work collaboratively and proactively to address evolving threats to civil aviation.

We are collaborating with aviation security authorities and the industry to develop an airport checkpoint of the future as well as improved screening procedures. For air cargo, perhaps a weaker link in the chain, we adopted new and more stringent security standards, notably a requirement for States to establish a supply chain security process. We are also expanding our cooperation with the World Customs Organization and other regulatory agencies on new security controls for air cargo. We want to prevent unnecessary delays in the movement of goods across international boundaries.

Overall, we are actively building consensus among Member States on critical priorities and issues, in preparation for the High-level Conference on Aviation Security this coming September in Montréal. That is when the realities and concerns of all Member States will contribute to a global solution for strengthening the global aviation security framework.

Our approach to environmental protection is no different. It rests on the universally-recognized truth that it is a problem that requires global solutions.

Our Member States have set for themselves global aspirational goals of 2 per cent annual fuel efficiency improvement up to the year 2050 and stabilizing CO₂ emissions at the 2020 levels. At their request, we are moving aggressively with the development and wider use of sustainable alternative fuels for aviation and the development of a global CO₂ certification standard for aircraft by 2013.

We are working together with Member States on action plans to help them identify how they can reduce CO₂ emissions from international aviation and the assistance they may require to achieve their objectives.

We have committed to accelerating work on developing a framework for market-based measures in international aviation for consideration, as well as a host of other measures to reduce the impact of aviation on the environment and will report back to them at the 38th Session of the ICAO Assembly next year.

Still in a spirit of global cooperation, we are closely monitoring the work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to ensure that international aviation is not singled out as a source of revenue in a disproportionate manner.

Having said all of this, it is imperative that we play our part in ensuring the sustainable development of air transport. We have and will continue to develop measures designed to streamline existing airline operations, improve productivity and reduce costs, from air navigation procedures to fuel efficiency.

Improved competition has had, and continues to have, a positive net effect on air transport efficiency and availability in every market where it has been applied, ultimately benefiting the travelling public.

As we proceed with liberalizing the industry, the sector should ensure that the monopolizing of commercial systems does not become the defining characteristic of the global air transport system.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is how ICAO intends to drive change and to continue exercising leadership as the global forum for international civil aviation.

Again, success will only come if we all work together. International cooperation was at the heart of the vision formulated by the drafters of the Chicago Convention close to 70 years ago and it remains the recipe for ensuring that future generations can continue to enjoy the fruits of a healthy and prosperous global air transport system.