



**Opening address by the President of the Council of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González,
to the IATA/FIDAE Wings of Change Conference**

(Santiago, Chile – 28 March 2012)

“Safety, Security and Infrastructure — Key issues in Latin America”

It is truly a pleasure for me to return to Chile once again to take part in the IATA/FIDAE Wings of Change Conference. I would like to thank the Government of Chile and the International Air Transport Association for kindly inviting me to participate in this event.

Since the last such conference in Santiago, the state of the global economy has been a major preoccupation for governments and industry alike. And yet, despite strong headwinds such as the implementation of severe austerity measures in Europe and the slower than expected economic recovery in other parts of the world, we are witnessing strong growth in the air transport sector.

The latest ICAO figures point to a 6.4 per cent increase in traffic for total world traffic during 2011 and the forecast is for the airline industry to grow by 6.2 and 6.1 per cent respectively in 2012 and 2013.

For Latin American airlines, traffic grew by 7.5 per cent last year, which is higher than the world average, and we expect that trend to continue with rates of 7.3 and 6.8 per cent for this year and next.

All of this is good news for civil aviation in Latin America and around the world, even more so given the remarkable efficiency of the global air transport system.

By all measures, it is as safe as it has ever been and 2011 is recognized as the safest year on record.

Since the events of 11 September 2001, the global air transport system 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.

Many other economic or industrial sectors would probably 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 reach 9 billion. We can only imagine what the demand for air travel will be by then.

The pressure on the air transport system will grow exponentially for everyone — airlines, airports, air navigation service providers, maintenance facilities and so on. I would also include the availability of qualified personnel to operate all of these systems.

So growth is both positive and challenging. More planes carrying more people to more destinations, in an ever-increasing spiral, will require that we ask, and effectively respond to, some fundamental questions.

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? Overall, how do we continue to provide citizens of the world with the enormous economic, social and humanitarian benefits they have come to rely upon, perhaps even take for granted, through efficient and regular air travel?

Part of the answer, I would suggest, lies in a special moment in time that brings us back to the very early days of aviation.

In Chicago, in 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.

By adhering to the Convention, 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.

What made it all possible can be summed up in one word — COOPERATION.

The global air transport system can only work efficiently and effectively through total and sustained cooperation among all stakeholders. There is no way around it.

Through the years, we have met successfully every challenge by honouring our commitment to work together.

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 accelerating our drive to protect the environment.

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 so that, 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. The Twelfth Air Navigation Conference later this year will consolidate a global approach to efficiency in the skies.

Likewise, States and industry stakeholders have a vested interest in working together to reinforce national, regional and international security regimes. Because, if left unchecked, terrorism could grow as more and more people flow through already congested airports and border crossings.

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

For example, ICAO is joining forces 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 security 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 are 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, as requested, 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.

Finally, to support the sustainable development of air transport, we 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.

Having provided this overview of actions on a global scale, I hasten to add that they must be complemented by similar and coordinated initiatives on the national and regional levels.

The dynamism of air transport in this part of the world is remarkable, driven in large part by strong economic growth, market liberalization and industry consolidation.

Based on our latest figures, the number of scheduled commercial flights in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2010 reached almost 3 million, a 13 per cent increase over 2009, the highest of any region. With a 10 per cent share of the global passenger traffic and record cargo traffic, there is every incentive to continue improving the scope and integrity of the air transport infrastructure.

I commend and I encourage you to diligently pursue your strategy which centres on the implementation of the Regional Air Navigation Plan and specific projects such as increased capacity building and a more flexible use of airspace through Performance-Based Navigation and greater civil/military cooperation.

I attach great importance to the free-flow of critical safety information. It is vital to improving safety at every level. I am pleased to note that in its latest Annual Safety Report, the Regional Aviation Safety Group – Pan America (RASG-PA) provides current and transparent information regarding major aviation safety risks. This data can greatly support States and industry stakeholders in developing initiatives and projects aimed at mitigating identified risk areas.

This is an excellent example of cooperation at the regional level and I urge States and industry alike to work closely with the RASG-PA in two ways. One is to keep sharing current safety-related information and the other is to actively participate in the Group's activities to raise safety awareness, in order to keep improving operational performance and reducing accidents.

This kind of cooperation is a prerequisite to strengthen aviation security and it is obviously very much alive here.

This past February in Caracas, 21 ICAO Member States from all of the Americas adopted a comprehensive strategy aimed at improving passenger and cargo security throughout the hemisphere, as part of a common effort to counter threats to civil aviation worldwide.

The third element of the theme of this conference is infrastructure and it is a crucial one. If air transport cannot count on efficient and well-run airports and air traffic systems, it cannot flourish to its full potential. China, India and other countries in rapidly developing markets are investing massive amounts of money in modernizing or building airports. As I mentioned earlier, billions will be spent by States and economic entities to modernize air navigation systems over the next few years.

ICAO has long provided guidance to Member States on all aspects of capacity building, from the construction, operation and financing of airports and facilities to policies and programmes aimed at increasing the efficiency of operations.

We have made it a priority to support States and Regional Organizations to upgrade the technological, operational and administrative components of their civil aviation, much of it through our Technical Co-operation Bureau. Such support includes the procurement of equipment, training and assistance in the creation of regulatory frameworks, development and management of large-scale infrastructure projects and capital improvements, as well as access to more than 2,500 experts in all disciplines.

The Technical Co-operation Bureau has assisted a number of States to develop and bring their regulatory systems to comply with ICAO Standards, so that their carriers can fly anywhere in the world and generate the required revenues that can further support their long-term sustainability.

Ultimately, ICAO exists to follow through on the vision embedded in the Chicago Convention and its perennial spirit of international cooperation upon which the future of air transport and of our global society depend.

Together, we have the power to make sure that future generations can continue to enjoy the fruits of a healthy and prosperous global air transport system. It is a responsibility that we must and will fulfil.