



**Address by the President of the Council of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González,
to the Thirty-third Plenary Session (Triennial)
of the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC)**

(Strasbourg, 10 July 2012)

It is a sincere pleasure for me to address the Thirty-third Plenary Session of the European Civil Aviation Conference. I would like to thank the President of ECAC for kindly inviting me to participate in your meeting.

The last time I had the honour of speaking before this audience was in 2009. Airlines and nations were then struggling in the midst of a near-global recession. As we know all too well, the environment of financial instability it created is still very much with us.

This is not the first financial crisis to impact our sector, either globally or regionally. Several others, like the oil shocks of the 1970s or the recession of the early 90s, seriously impacted industry profitability. And yet, year after year, the growth of air transport continued virtually unabated.

There is perhaps no better proof of the essential role played by air transport in our national, regional and global economies. What is most encouraging is that the trend is expected to continue.

ICAO's latest analysis is for global air traffic to grow by 5.4 per cent during 2012 and the expected annual growth rates for 2013 and 2014 are 6.0 and 6.4 per cent respectively. In the European Region, we anticipate growth rates of 4.2 per cent this year, 4.4 in 2013, and 4.8 in 2014. Financially, however, the world's airlines generated an estimated combined operating profit of 14.1 billion dollars in 2011, representing only 2.2 per cent of operating revenues.

Your deliberations today and tomorrow could enhance the capacity of air transport to generate even greater economic prosperity. Governments and industry should strive for an operating environment that promotes competition yet is not burdened by excess or poorly harmonized regulation. Whether in Europe or elsewhere, improved competition has had a positive net effect on air transport efficiency and availability of services in markets where it has been applied.

Recent ECAC successes show what can be accomplished when we all work together. Among them are the Safety Oversight Comparative Analysis Study, ongoing European Search and Rescue effort coordination, facilitating of pan-European input to the ICAO Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection and key assistance provided by your Aviation and Climate Change Action Plans Experts Group.

The close relationship between ICAO and ECAC is reflected in the scheduling of your Triennial Plenary Session, which makes it possible to incorporate your consolidated policies and positions into the triennial ICAO Assembly cycle.

With that in mind, I would like to preview ICAO's forthcoming Assembly in 2013 and outline some of the Organization's priorities.

You will not be surprised to learn that Safety remains ICAO's guiding Strategic Objective. Yes, 2011 was the safest year on record for global aviation and I commend your Region's contribution to that remarkable achievement. But as history has shown, that can change quickly if we don't keep our sights on systematically improving levels of safety.

At the beginning of my presentation, I stressed the importance for policy makers to address regulatory and other factors that limit the ability of air transport in terms of economic recovery and growth. We must not forget, however, the link between growth and safety. This is at the heart of our strategic thinking and programme development.

For example, ICAO is currently coordinating revisions to its new Global Aviation Safety Plan and its Global Air Navigation Plan to assist Member States and industry stakeholders collaborate more effectively in matching safety and air navigation requirements. The new Global Aviation Safety Plan will offer high-level policy guidance to the Regional Aviation Safety Groups recently established by ICAO around the world.

This takes into consideration that States will need to invest some 120 billion dollars for upgrades to the global Air Traffic Management system over the next few decades. These upgrades are essential for the additional capacity required to safely manage the projected growth in traffic.

Accordingly, ICAO's new Air Navigation Plan features a flexible and transparent strategy that will offer States and operators the level of investment clarity they need to properly assess their local ATM and avionics needs.

Known as the Aviation System Block Upgrade strategy, the strategy organizes technologies and procedures based on specific airspace characteristics and requirements. It also defines flexible timelines for each set of upgrades, ultimately leading to a globally-harmonized, safer and more efficient air transport network.

Europe's contribution and leadership in this process, primarily through its ongoing SESAR undertaking, have been highly instrumental in supporting the development of ICAO's consensus-based Block Upgrade approach.

The next step will be to convene all aviation stakeholders to ICAO's Twelfth Air Navigation Conference, from 19 to 30 November 2012, in Montréal. Our objective is to consolidate a global approach to efficiency in the skies. Member States and selected international organizations will review the latest version of the Global Air Navigation Plan, set priorities and refine the way forward based on lessons learned.

Turning to Security, ICAO is cooperating with national aviation security authorities and industry stakeholders to develop future passenger screening checkpoint models. The goal is to better integrate new technologies, intelligence and specific techniques to detect objects and persons that may pose a threat. The intention is to also reflect recent initiatives that will significantly enhance global aviation security.

This includes new and more stringent security standards in Annex 17 — *Security*. The proactive measures are based on currently perceived threats and have been highly praised by industry. The most notable is a requirement for States to establish a supply chain security process for air cargo.

ICAO is also implementing an aviation security assistance strategy that takes into account sound risk-management principles and relies heavily on our aviation security audits to identify deficiencies.

Looking ahead, a number of regional conferences held around the world will accelerate the implementation of the Declaration on Aviation Security, adopted by the ICAO Assembly in 2010. The meetings have proven effective in creating consensus on aviation security issues and priorities leading up to the global High-level Conference on Aviation Security from 12 to 14 September 2012 at ICAO Headquarters.

With respect to the protection of the environment, ICAO's approach is no different than for safety and security. It rests on the universally-recognized truth that climate change is a global problem that requires global solutions.

At the last ICAO Assembly in 2010, Member States adopted Assembly Resolution A37-19, in which they agreed to pursue the development of technological, operational and market-based measures, and the wider use of sustainable alternative fuels in aviation.

In light of the European position put forward at the last Assembly, I would like to comment on our work regarding market-based measures.

Earlier this year, the Council of ICAO agreed to concentrate on four options relative to market-based measures. These were analyzed against evaluation criteria that considered the guiding principles outlined in the Assembly Resolution and a report was presented to the Council on 26 June 2012. After careful consideration, the number of options was reduced from four to three. The evaluation of the remaining options will continue over the summer, to further identify the qualitative and quantitative implications of each. The results will be presented to the Council at its autumn session, along with a proposed framework for market-based measures. This is no easy task and a good deal of work still needs to be done before we report to the 38th Session of the Assembly in the fall of 2013.

Another area of intense activity is a global CO₂ certification Standard for aircraft, with a target date of 2013. Concurrently, much of our technological and operational focus with Block Upgrades I mentioned earlier is to reduce aircraft emissions that contribute to climate change.

Before I conclude, I would like to raise an issue of common concern that cuts across all disciplines – the availability of skilled personnel to support the safe, effective and sustainable expansion of every aspect of the air transport system over the coming decades.

There are many pieces to this puzzle, including recruitment strategies, domestic education policies, employee retainment, and training. On this last point, ICAO is bringing together training, education and operations stakeholders under the umbrella of its Next Generation of Aviation Professionals initiative. We have also produced new training certification guidelines globally through the TRAINAIR PLUS programme.

And so, as we head into the next Assembly, let us channel all of our resources to developing viable and long-lasting solutions to all of these challenges and others that may present themselves. We have a collective responsibility to do so, so that the global air transport system continues to provide the enormous economic, social and cultural benefits that the citizens of the world have come to expect.