



**Remarks by the Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Raymond Benjamin ,
to the High-level Safety Conference
(Montreal, 1 April 2010)**

1. Ladies and gentlemen, we have come to the end of a very successful conference.
2. The conference began with a status report on the safety targets contained in the Global Aviation Safety Plan. As you may recall, we've made good progress in achieving some of the GASP targets, but not all. While the number of fatal accidents and related fatalities has decreased over the past ten years, the overall accident rate has remained steady. Of significant concern is the variation in accident rates among States as well as regions.
3. Which brings us to the central theme of this conference: to work collaboratively – sharing information with the objective of responding to risks before they result in accidents or serious incidents.
4. Earlier in the Conference, we made a good start toward information sharing when ICAO, the Federal Aviation Administration of the United States, the Commission of the European Union and the International Air Transport Association signed a Declaration of Intent on the Development of a Global Safety Information Exchange Agreement.
5. These are bold steps that we are taking together. Based on the discussions of this conference, it is clear that ICAO must play a central role in the sharing of information, and I can assure you that we will make the most effective use of our resources to make meaningful contributions.
6. During his opening remarks, President Kobeh called upon this High Level Safety Conference to address five specific areas, and I'd like to review the outcomes of those deliberations, as well as their implications for a future safety strategy.
7. First, the conference's decision to endorse the transition to a continuous monitoring approach will provide ICAO with valuable safety information to be shared with the international community. As a supplement to the robust USOAP audit data, continuous monitoring will create a steady flow of information allowing for more timely identification and mitigation of emerging safety issues. Based on your deliberations, ICAO will continue to work in a transparent manner, assuring that information learned through the continuous monitoring process is used to promote aviation safety, and not used for the purpose of retribution or economic advantage.
8. Second, the conference has provided the guidance needed for the aviation community to implement a truly international information sharing initiative. ICAO will convene groups of experts to make safety information sharing a reality through development of common safety metrics, harmonized analysis methods as well as the required technical capabilities. The willingness to share sensitive safety information is an essential step toward a more proactive approach to managing the risks inherent to a complex and dynamic operating environment. Nonetheless, this type of collaboration is essential to influence strategic safety decisions through the predictive analysis of accurate and comprehensive information, rather than primarily basing such decisions in response to tragic accidents.

9. The third item referred to this conference by the President was to affirm the role of regional safety oversight organizations. As you may recall from the briefing delivered at the beginning of the conference by Nancy Graham, States have safety oversight systems in varying levels of maturity, and many lack the necessary resources to implement complex safety programmes on their own. Therefore, we must ensure that alternative solutions are available and regional safety oversight organizations can play a strategic role.
10. Fourth, the conference endorsed the safety framework as proposed by ICAO – a necessary step to ensure that the many components of our respective safety programmes are implemented in a strategic and coordinated manner. ICAO will continue to develop its internal processes to ensure that realistic objectives are set and realized through sound business practices. Beyond the commitment to improve our internal processes, ICAO will take measures to make all safety-related documents available in the six official ICAO languages. This is a personal commitment that I take given the importance I attach to language services
11. Finally, the conference has taken an important step in endorsing the creation of a dedicated Safety Annex; only the fourth new Annex since the early years of ICAO and the first in over 25 years. A new Annex will require a significant investment of resources but it is an investment that will pay dividends in the better management and alignment of ICAO's Standards and Recommended Practices. Also, safety professionals in the international community will have a clearer understanding of what is expected of them.
12. But no matter how robust our shared information and predictive safety analyses, we will still learn difficult lessons from accidents although, hopefully, they will be few and far between. And so, the Conference has re-affirmed that all accidents need to be thoroughly investigated in order to ensure that lessons are learned and integrated into the safety framework. As a result, ICAO will review Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) and guidance material to ensure that the data necessary to support accident investigations is available. This review will include provisions for the recovery of data and information from flight recorders. ICAO will also assess changes which may be necessary to improve surveillance, flight monitoring and communications in oceanic airspace or in remote areas, including timely and adequate search and rescue services. In addition, ICAO will review existing provisions and guidance material regarding flight deck activities in order to assess whether further action on this issue is required.
13. Yes, this has been a very productive conference, but there is a substantial amount of work to follow. It is critical for ICAO to do this work, but we will need to prioritize our efforts and determine which tasks can be accomplished in the short, medium and long term. Of critical importance is your support to ensure that we have the resources to achieve the ambitious goals established by this conference.
14. As you are aware, we are establishing a budget for the next triennium and the Council and the Assembly will have to provide the necessary resources to achieve the ambitious goals that you have identified. In this context, I am more than grateful to the United Arab Emirates for their generous contribution of \$200,000 in support of our safety efforts. Also, I would like to publically acknowledge the Republic of Korea for their contribution a few months ago of \$100,000 to substantially improve the work undertaken by the Air Navigation Commission. Finally, I want to express my continued appreciation for the numerous Member States who provide ongoing assistance to ICAO through secondments of talented aviation professionals and with other resources.

15. Your success in achieving the objectives of this Conference in such a short time frame is indeed remarkable. As Secretary General I wish to acknowledge Nancy Graham for her leadership and to recognize the tremendous work done behind the scenes by her exceptional team in the Air Navigation Bureau and also by the staff of other Bureaux who have helped this event run smoothly. Most importantly, we are indebted to the Chairman of the Conference, Mr. Radu Mircea Birceanu, who has displayed strong management skills in taking us through the agenda.

16. Let me also mention the good media attention that the conference has received and my thanks to the Delegations for helping to get the message out on what we have accomplished at this ICAO High-level Safety Conference.
