



**Address by the Secretary General of ICAO  
Mr. Raymond Benjamin  
to the  
Association of African Aviation Training  
Organizations (AATO) Conference  
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Honourable Amos Kimunya, Minister of Transport, Republic of Kenya  
Dr Cyrius Njiru, Permanent Secretary, Minister of Transport  
Col. Hilary Kioko, Director General, Kenya Civil Aviation Authority  
Justina Nyaga, Director, East African School of Aviation

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to join you today for what is undoubtedly a significant milestone in the process of harmonizing aviation training in Africa — the creation of the Association of African Aviation Training Organizations (AATO).

In many ways, this initiative is another demonstration that Africa has come a long way since the launch of the AFI Plan on the eve of the 36th Session of the ICAO Assembly in 2007.

The overall objective of the Plan was to address important aviation safety concerns in Africa, and I have followed with enormous interest the achievements you have made over the years.

Safety is our shared *raison d'être*. I have always felt privileged to have been entrusted — like you — with the noble mission to protect the lives and well-being of the travelling public.

Together, we must continue to do everything within our power to make sure that air travellers get to their destination safely and unharmed, and this includes ensuring that appropriate training and skills development are provided for all aviation professionals. It represents a real challenge for the civil aviation community, but one that needs to be dealt with.

Two years ago in Cairo, as I attended the second Pan-African Aviation Training Coordination Conference, I was privileged to learn first-hand how Africa intended to address aviation training and I had the opportunity to suggest that pooling and connecting strengths and resources of institutions through harmonization, standardization and quality assurance represented in my opinion the most productive and effective option.

The Pan-African Aviation Training Coordination conferences supported this approach and adopted in Cape Town, in July 2011, the framework for harmonization of aviation training in Africa through:

the creation of an “Association of African Aviation Training Organizations”;  
the establishment of an “African Aviation Training Accreditation Board”; and  
the establishment of criteria for mutual recognition of credits, certificates, diplomas, and degrees.

As you move towards building each block of this ambitious framework, you can count on my full support.

It is no secret that the training industry lacks being represented within the international civil aviation community by an umbrella organization as are airlines, airports, air traffic controllers and pilots, which means that it does not have the opportunity to make use of formal forums and networks to effectively and collectively make its positions and concerns known in international aviation gatherings and before government regulatory authorities, including ICAO.

I therefore welcome the creation of the Association of African Aviation Training Organizations because it should, and will, play an essential role in the development of a training policy for the continent and become an effective instrument to promote international training standards in Africa.

It will also have an important role to play in tackling the foreseeable global shortage of competent and qualified aviation professionals who will support the safe, secure and sustainable development of air transport for the years to come.

This is a major challenge facing the aviation community and ICAO has started to address it by adopting a Civil Aviation Training Policy in September 2010, which enables the implementation of a comprehensive framework to ensure that all training provided by ICAO, or by third parties on its behalf, is assessed to guarantee that it meets rigorous standards.

One of the key programmes supporting the Policy is the TRAINAIR PLUS programme, which provides access to high-level quality course materials, but also assists its members in establishing adequate training facilities, instructional teams, methodologies, processes and procedures, including a quality management system.

Another ICAO initiative is the Next Generation of Aviation Professionals (NGAP) programme. NGAP focuses on strategic elements such as the development of competency frameworks for key aviation personnel. After having developed competency frameworks for maintenance personnel, the programme is now moving to flight crew, air traffic controllers and air traffic safety electronics personnel.

Once the Association is established, I am sure that it will want to work closely with ICAO on NGAP activities to help aviation personnel meet the demands of new procedures and increasingly complex technologies.

So, although the creation of the Association will not solve all problems, it will surely facilitate necessary collaboration between regulators, industry and training organizations to promote best practices and to bridge the gap between training needs and training capacities across States and across regions in Africa.

The Association and other training organizations have a number of key challenges before them, but I believe that there are a few that would merit early attention, such as:

**The development of instructional teams, training managers and State employees in charge of safety oversight functions.** Indeed, the lack of adequate training and skills development plans has been identified by ICAO's Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) in Africa as a major shortcoming and as a barrier to the overall development of air transport in the region.

**Building trust and pooling resources** — there are a number of training organizations in Africa with good facilities but limited scope of activity. These organizations need the critical mass of resources and clientele to grow and to effectively meet the increasing demand for training.

**Ensuring that people trained in one field are assigned to work in the same field.** It seems logical, but there have been too many cases when job functions and responsibilities did not match training.

ICAO can assist in building instructional teams, developing valid courses and guidelines for the establishment and management of training. However, I do encourage training organizations under the umbrella of the Association to work closely with the aviation industry to use and share existing validated competency frameworks and training methodologies.

My pledge is to continue to work with all of you — African States and stakeholders, regulators, industry and international organizations — so that together, we can bridge the gap between the training needs and the current capacities for aviation training in Africa.

The responsibility for improving safety in Africa rests with each and every one of you. Under the leadership of ICAO, the international aviation community stands ready to assist, yet solutions must continue to be by Africans, for Africans and I must say that the establishment of the Association of African Aviation Training Organizations is a very positive development. So, congratulations!

I now wish you a most productive and stimulating Conference. Thank you.

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