



**OPENING REMARKS BY
ICAO SECRETARY GENERAL RAYMOND BENJAMIN
TO THE AFI AVIATION SECURITY MEETING**

Dakar, Senegal - 28 May 2014

AFCAC President Air Commodore Kwame Mamphye,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to welcome all of you to this brief but crucial meeting, held jointly by the African Civil Aviation Commission and ICAO, on the adoption of a plan for enhancing aviation security and facilitation in Africa. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Later today you will consider a proposal in this regard, presented by the Representative of Uganda to ICAO, Mr. Kabbs Twijuke. Certainly, the political willingness to strengthen aviation security is evidenced in past declarations by African States; what is still missing is an effective mechanism to turn this willingness into action.

The situation in Africa is urgent, given the gaps in the aviation security system highlighted by ICAO security audits in recent years. Notably, Africa's circumstances are much worse than the global average.

Considering that civil aviation is only as secure as its weakest link, it is imperative to address the serious challenges that face the continent.

That said, I am encouraged by the present effort to establish an African plan for enhancing security and facilitation. I am particularly impressed that the proposal underscores the need to improve aviation security in a sustainable manner, with a parallel improvement in air transport facilitation. This strategy is perfectly in tune with ICAO's Strategic Objective.

You can count on ICAO's support as we move forward. ICAO is well placed to coordinate various activities in partnership with all stakeholders across Africa. This is an appropriate role for us, since the entire world stands to benefit from an improvement in the level of security in Africa.

Similarly, international tourism and commerce can profit from improvements in Africa's facilitation processes. As a matter of fact, effective and efficient entry and departure processes, and facilities and services for traffic, are essential to accommodate growth in air travel in Africa and elsewhere.

On the security front, it remains vital to focus our efforts on those States that are unable, for one reason or another, to correct serious deficiencies. Together with our partners, ICAO will continue to assist States on a priority basis. This includes capacity building by means of human resource development through aviation security training activities.

I am pleased to note the presence of key donors at today's meeting, as well as some of our assistance partners. I would like to acknowledge your generous contribution of funds and expertise to ICAO's efforts to help States address their shortcomings. I also wish to assure you that ICAO will continue to show leadership on the global stage and remains committed to coordinating AVSEC assistance available from States, industry, financial institutions and other stakeholders.

The proposal before you contains several strategies that ICAO can readily endorse. One noteworthy suggestion is that the African States re-establish an Aviation Security Committee under AFCAC's auspices. I firmly believe one key to success lies in resolving security concerns through regional efforts. Regional activities may strengthen security through the sharing of scarce resources, while improving the level of communication and cooperation amongst participating States. ICAO, of course, stands ready to facilitate such activities.

Along the same lines, you may wish to consider setting up a regional Facilitation Committee to promote coordination at the regional and State levels between the many organizations whose mandates relate to border security at airports.

In summary, the need to improve aviation security in Africa is urgent because of systemic vulnerabilities and the threat environment. And there is a real need to enhance facilitation to maximize the efficiency of air transport.

Ladies and gentlemen, ICAO appreciates Africa's commitment to enhancing aviation security and facilitation, and we look forward to our continued cooperation in these vital areas.

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