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GLOBAL AVIATION SAFETY AND SECURITY STRENGTHENED AS 35TH ICAO ASSEMBLY ADOPTS LONG-TERM PLANS OF ACTION

MONTREAL, 8 October 2004 –The Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) concluded its 35th Session today with the adoption of resolutions to strengthen and promote greater transparency to its global safety and security programmes, while endorsing long-term plans of action in other major areas of global air transport. The Assembly, held at ICAO Headquarters in Montreal, began on 28 September.

"The record attendance of 1304 delegates from 175 Contracting States and 36 observer delegations is an unequivocal vote of confidence in the capacity of this Organization to maintain current the regulatory framework so essential to the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation in the 21st century," said Dr. Assad Kotaite, President of the Council of ICAO and President of the Assembly.

"Much of the work at this Assembly consisted of reviewing, endorsing and building on achievements of the past three years to achieve our overall objectives: optimum safety and security; the continued progressive, worldwide liberalization of air transport; a globally interoperable, harmonized and seamless air traffic management system; maximum compatibility between the safe and orderly development of civil aviation and the quality of the environment; and the further development of a unified, global legal framework", he explained.

Aviation safety

In reaffirming aviation safety as the primary objective of the Organization, the Assembly recognized the ICAO Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) as having raised the level of safety oversight around the world. The USOAP consists of regular, mandatory, systematic and harmonized safety audits carried out by ICAO in all 188 Contracting States to assess the level of implementation of ICAO standards. Since its creation on 1 January 1999, it has proven effective in identifying safety deficiencies and prompting States to take corrective action. To date, 181 Contracting States and five territories have been audited, with 152 receiving follow-up audits. The Programme was assessed in 2002 to be ISO 9001 compliant.

The Assembly endorsed the expansion of the Programme – from personnel licensing, operation and airworthiness of aircraft – to all safety-related ICAO standards, beginning 1 January 2005. Included will be airports, air traffic control and other key components of the air transport system. The sharing among audited States of full audit reports, instead of summary reports, as is now the case, was requested to further strengthen safety awareness.

The results of USOAP underscored the need for a shift in focus from developing new standards to facilitating the implementation of existing ones. In 2003, the voluntary International Financial Facility for Aviation Safety (IFFAS) was created to provide financial assistance to States which cannot obtain financing through traditional means for safety-related projects identified through USOAP. Also endorsed was a shift in focus towards performance-based standards and away from detailed technical specifications.

ICAO's programme for the prevention of Controlled Flight Into Terrain (CFIT) accidents – among the leading causes of aircraft accidents – was believed to be a significant contributor to the reduction in the worldwide accident rate. The Assembly requested the Organization to accelerate the development of standards and guidance in this area.

On the need to promote the exchange of safety information derived from incident reports, which helps improve safety, and the need to protect the confidentiality of such information, the Assembly passed a resolution for ICAO to develop legal guidance for States in establishing national laws and regulations that strike a balance between accessibility and protection of information.

For the first time, the health of passengers and crews on international flights was recognized as an integral element of safe air travel. A resolution was passed to review standards relating to health issues, to create new ones where appropriate and to support further research on the health consequences of air transport.

Aviation Security

The Assembly emphasized that aviation security must continue to be treated as a matter of highest priority and urged ICAO and Contracting States, through increased global cooperation, to increase their efforts to safeguard international civil aviation from unlawful interference.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the ICAO *Aviation Security Plan of Action* established following the events of 11 September 2001, the Assembly urged that the programme be incorporated, as soon as possible, into the regular budget of the Organization, since its implementation is largely dependent on voluntary contributions.

It also requested greater sharing among Member States of the results of the ICAO Universal Security Audit Programme (USAP). USAP began in November of 2002 and by the end of 2004, 60 States will have been audited.

On the issue of man-portable defence systems (MANPADS), the Assembly urged all Contracting States to exercise strict and effective controls on the movement and storage of MANPADS around the world, while ensuring the destruction of existing units.

Finally, the Assembly urged States to keep fully up to date the provisions of Annex 17 (Security) to the Chicago Convention and, if they have not yet done so, to become parties to international conventions related to aviation security, the latest being the Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection.

The Environment

The Assembly recognized the considerable progress made on the reduction of noise and gas emissions since the 2001 Assembly and emphasized ICAO's leadership role in all matters related to aviation and the protection of the environment.

Earlier this year, the ICAO Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP) recommended new oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) standards 12 percent more stringent than the levels agreed to in 1999. Substantive guidance material was produced to assist States in the implementation of a "balanced approach" to noise management, comprising four principal elements: reduction of noise at the source; land-use planning and management; noise abatement operational procedures; and operating restrictions on aircraft.

On the complex and difficult issue of market-based measures to limit or reduce the environmental impact of aircraft engine emissions, the Assembly welcomed progress on both voluntary measures and emissions trading. It requested ICAO to study the effectiveness of, and to develop further guidance on, emissions levies by the next

regular session of the Assembly in 2007. It further urged States not to implement greenhouse gas emissions charges unilaterally prior to the issue being considered and discussed again by the Assembly in 2007. It recognized, however, that implementing such charges by mutual agreement of States that are members of a regional economic integration organization on operators of those States is not precluded.

Technical Co-operation

In view of the sustained growth of the Technical Co-operation Programme, the trend to privatization of some elements of the air transport system and the urgency of funding remedial action identified by the USOAP, the Assembly resolved that ICAO should expand the Programme to non-State entities (public or private). The expansion requires that these new partners be involved in civil aviation projects, in ICAO Contracting States, designed to enhance the safety, security and efficiency of international civil aviation. The Programme for 2003 amounted to US\$110 million and is expected to reach some US\$194 million in 2004, an US\$84 million increase.

Legal

The Assembly emphasized the need to rapidly proceed with the modernization of the 1952 Rome Convention to deal, among other issues, with liability for damage caused by foreign aircraft to third parties.

Budget

The Assembly approved a US\$197 million triennial budget of the Organization as follows:

2005	-	US \$64 669 000
2006	-	US \$65 820 000
2007	-	US \$66 511 000

Blueprints for the future

The Assembly reviewed and endorsed the results of major conferences which established the future direction of global air transport.

- A High-level, Ministerial Conference on Aviation Security was held in February 2002, with an overall objective of "preventing, combatting and eradicating terrorism involving civil aviation, restoring public confidence in air travel and promoting the health of the air transport industry". Based on the Conference's recommendations, the Council established an *ICAO Plan of Action for Strengthening Aviation Security* which included a programme of regular, mandatory, systematic and harmonized audits to evaluate aviation security in all Contracting States, and to help identify and correct deficiencies in the implementation of security-related standards.
- The fifth Worldwide Air Transport Conference of March 2003 established a strong consensus on a framework for the economic liberalization of the air transport industry and endorsed a Declaration of Global Principles to "create an environment in which international air transport may develop and flourish in a stable, efficient and economical manner without compromising safety and security and while respecting social and labour standards".

- The Eleventh Air Navigation Conference of September 2003 led to the formulation of a strategy for the establishment of a globally harmonized and seamless air navigation system, based on an operational concept to ensure optimum safety and efficiency of the global air traffic management (ATM) system as demand for airspace capacity increases in the coming years. Effective 28 November 2002, new air routes between Australasia and Europe came into effect, cutting travel times between the two Regions, with more convenient flight schedules for passengers, considerable economic advantages to airlines, environmental benefits because of reduced fuel burn, and enhanced safety. More airlines used the new polar routes, cutting distances between North America and Europe to the Asia and Pacific Regions.

Council

The Assembly elected a new 36-member Council, the governing body of the Organization, for a three-year term. Its members are Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Honduras, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Tunisia, United Kingdom and United States.

Officers

The Assembly elected by acclamation as its President Dr. Assad Kotaite, President of the ICAO Council. First Vice-President was Mr. E. Stimpson, Alternate Chief Delegate of the United States. Second Vice-President was Mr. A. Borsato, Chief Delegate of Argentina. Third Vice-President was Mr. S. Kumpeera, Chief Delegate of Thailand. Fourth Vice-President was Mr. M. Al-Ghaith, Chief Delegate of the United Arab Emirates.

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A specialized agency of the United Nations, ICAO was created in 1944 to promote the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation throughout the world. It sets standards and regulations necessary for aviation safety, security, efficiency and regularity, as well as for aviation environmental protection. The Organization serves as the forum for cooperation in all fields of civil aviation among its 188 Contracting States.