

**Address by the Chairman of the Air Transport Committee,
Ms. Anne McGinley,
at the Opening Session of the Worldwide Air Transport Conference
(Montreal, 24 - 29 March 2003)**

I have the honour and pleasure in my capacity as Chairman of the Air Transport Committee, to join the President of the Council in welcoming you to Montreal and this Worldwide Air Transport Conference, which has the theme “Challenges and Opportunities of Liberalization”.

This is only the fifth Conference which ICAO has held on air transport regulation. Considerable planning and preparation go into bringing these Conferences into fruition and the present one is no exception. Although the background to this Conference is well documented elsewhere, let me recall just a few of these milestones.

The suggestion for a Conference on liberalization was initially conceived in the Air Transport Committee late in 2000 in response to significant developments in the air transport industry and regulatory policy since the fourth such Conference in 1994. At the time, the Committee noted, in particular, the trends towards liberalization, developments in the trade in services field and the call by the 32nd Session of the Assembly in 1998 for a more proactive leadership role by ICAO on air transport regulatory matters. The Council subsequently endorsed the Committee’s proposal for a Conference on liberalization and directed that planning and preparations begin. States were consulted about potential topics for an agenda during 2001. In December 2001 the Council adopted the draft agenda that is before you. The letter of invitation to States and Organizations was sent out by the Secretary General that same month. In the intervening 15 months, ICAO has been preparing intensively for this event.

As you can see, from inception to implementation, this Conference has taken more than two years. And as you could well imagine, a meeting of this magnitude and complexity entails an enormous amount of detailed planning, logistical arrangements and thorough, in-depth documentation. This latter task has been undertaken not only by the Secretariat but also with the assistance of an expert Panel of the Air Transport Committee, the Air Transport Regulation Panel, which includes members from 25 States and 4 international organizations. The Panel has been carrying out work by correspondence almost continually over the past year and met in Montreal for a week last May. Through this whole process, the Air Transport Committee has monitored and maintained a close interest in the preparations.

But such preparations have not been by ICAO alone. You, the Contracting States, have been consulted on the draft agenda and you have been fully informed by ICAO of the Conference objectives, arrangements and preparations. Considerable efforts have also been made to ensure that States are well briefed and informed as regards the issues and proposals being put forward to the Conference. One of the means ICAO has used to help States prepare for the Conference was the convening late last year of a series of informal seminars in the regions, in many cases with the coordination and cooperation of relevant regional civil aviation bodies. These informational and promotional efforts will hopefully have smoothed your path and provided a solid foundation to your deliberations this week.

I would also like to pay tribute to the cooperative efforts of the many international organizations here today who have also contributed to the preparations for this vital event for our industry.

Let me turn briefly now to your task. Your agenda is in four parts. The first item, called Preview, will be the opportunity to note the liberalization experiences tabled by States and regions and to decide how we may benefit from it, as well as a chance to consider how safety and security considerations fit into the liberalization picture. The second agenda item, an examination of key regulatory issues in liberalization, is the most substantive item of the conference and will occupy the bulk of your time and effort over the next five and a half days. Almost three and a half days have been set aside in your tentative timetable to consider each of the seven key issues listed under this item. Given that this averages out at only a few hours per issue you will need a concerted effort to complete your consideration of these items in the time allotted.

Under the third agenda item you are being asked to review two Template Air Services Agreements (the TASAs, one for the bilateral and the other for the regional or plurilateral situations), but primarily to comment on this TASA concept as well as its future usage. It should be noted from the outset that these are not draft agreements for adoption or endorsement as such but rather guidance material, consisting of draft language and policy options to help States in the liberalization process and in their negotiations with one another.

Under the fourth and final agenda item you will consider the future role of ICAO on economic regulation in the context of liberalization in this sector, and in relation to other organizations involved or interested in air transport regulation. Also under this final item will be one of the principal outcomes of the Conference, a Declaration of global principles for international air transport, a draft of which has been prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the Air Transport Regulation Panel. A particular

procedure for handling this sensitive item is being presented to you so as to maximize your opportunity for providing input to the draft, thereby enabling a discussion, when it comes up later in the week, on what should be a relatively mature draft Declaration. As presented to you in the Secretariat documentation, the draft Declaration is one of broad principles, and I would commend to you to maintain this approach in order to accommodate all regulatory perspectives. In this way, you will be able to maintain a cohesiveness, clarity and balance to the Declaration, which this Conference can then present to the outside world as a framework within which liberalization can continue to evolve.

Given your extremely tight schedule, you will need to maintain a clear focus in your debates and a willingness to reach accord on each issue in order that you can complete your agenda and bring this important meeting to a successful conclusion.

Ladies and gentlemen, you have before you a comprehensive agenda, extensive documentation, thorough preparations and arrangements. Among the air transport community there is great interest in this Conference, and in the results you will reach. I wish you every success and the Air Transport Committee looks forward with anticipation to reviewing in the first instance the Conference outcome in its next Session.

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