



**Opening address by the President of the Council  
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),  
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González,  
to the Environment Colloquium 2007**

**(Montreal, 14 May 2007)**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the Council of ICAO, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to this Colloquium.

At the next regular session of the ICAO Assembly, from 18 to 28 September, one of the major issues before the Member States of ICAO will be the environment. National Delegations will update the *Consolidated statement of continuing ICAO policies and practices related to environmental protection* and deal with the contentious issue of market-based measures to mitigate the impact of aviation on the environment.

This colloquium is a timely opportunity to provide information on the latest developments in this area, in particular the results and progress emanating from the seventh meeting of ICAO's Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection – CAEP/7. It is a forum for us to cultivate new ideas and solutions that will facilitate the Assembly decision-making process.

In doing so, we must recognize the dilemma in which we find ourselves. Aircraft today are 70 per cent more energy efficient than they were some 40 years ago. Overall fuel efficiency of civil aviation can be further improved through a variety of means, including technology, operations and air traffic management. However, such improvements are expected to only partially offset the growth of aviation emissions.

Since the 1999 Special report on Aviation and the Global Atmosphere, we have continued to advance our understanding of the impacts of aviation on the environment. The 1999 report estimated *inter alia* that the contribution from aviation to the total radiative forcing by all human activities was 3.5 per cent and expected to grow. Recent scientific studies estimate that aviation's contribution is less than expected. Still, the scientific community now asserts a clear urgency for action on climate change. Their findings convey that warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global mean sea level. Human activities such as fossil fuel burning have a substantial contribution to these effects and aviation is one of the activities that burn fossil fuel, so we have a responsibility to take action.

This illustrates a paradox of our modern society. Aviation is a driver of economic, social and cultural development around the world. It supports the world's largest industry, travel and tourism, and helps to raise the standard of living of millions of people worldwide. Yet, it contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and ultimately to global climate change and has an impact on local air quality in the vicinity of airports.

As with other sectors of the economy, this is a societal question. As individuals, we increasingly want to travel by air. At the same time, we want cleaner air and a reduction of the impact of our lifestyle on the environment.

We have a choice. Either we fly less, or we find a way to mitigate the impact of aviation on the environment. The consensus is obviously on continuing to fly and ensuring greater compatibility between aviation and the environment.

This approach is contained in ICAO's strategic objective on the environment and is summed up in three goals: limit or reduce the number of people affected by significant aircraft noise; limit or reduce the impact of aircraft engine emissions on local air quality and; limit or reduce the impact of aviation greenhouse gas emissions on the global climate.

In keeping with our mandate as the lead organization for international civil aviation, we see our role as fostering cooperation among all stakeholders, providing the required assistance, creating standards, developing supporting guidance, instituting the overall regulatory process; and now more than ever, facilitating and promoting concrete actions.

The Colloquium is designed to support this mandate. It is divided into five panels in a logical sequence, from defining the problem to finding solutions and planning for the future.

The first step must be to understand the nature of the problem. Rational decisions can only be made with technical and scientific information. This reduces uncertainties, clarifies issues and leads to well-balanced and fair decisions. Decisions based on sound empirical data constitute the building blocks for arriving at the best solutions and for setting up the optimum measures for mitigating the impact of aviation on the environment.

In 1999, ICAO took the lead and aviation was the first sector to request from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) a technical and scientific report on its impact on the environment. The IPCC shed more light on the nature of the problem earlier this year with their Fourth Assessment Report. Once we increase our understanding of the situation, we will be in a better

position to assess the magnitude of the problem, review proposed mitigation measures and establish a clear direction.

During the Colloquium, leading experts from the world of aviation and the environment will shed light on all of these subjects so that by the end of the meeting, we will have the most comprehensive overview on this issue. This will make it possible for you to formulate comments and suggestions for consideration at the upcoming ICAO Assembly.

But the process does not end in September. That will be only the beginning. We also have to think of the upcoming years and ICAO's continuing leading role in a Post Kyoto period. ICAO will continue to provide leadership as the only global forum that can bring all parties together on aviation environmental issues. ICAO is the voice of aviation in international discussions and, together with our 190 Contracting States and in cooperation with main international non-governmental organizations, will be able to pursue this critical role. This is what ICAO has always done and will continue to do in the future.