



**OPENING ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION (ICAO), DR. ASSAD KOTAITE,
TO THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE FACILITATION DIVISION (FAL/12)**

(Cairo, Egypt, 22 March 2004)

On behalf of the Council and the Secretary General, I would like to extend to all of you a warm welcome to this Twelfth Session of the Facilitation Division and to express to His Excellency the Minister of Civil Aviation of Egypt, Air Marshal Ahmed Mohamed Shafik, and through him to the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt, my deep appreciation and thanks for hosting this Facilitation Division and in particular for their kind hospitality. The excellent facilities and services they have provided will certainly contribute greatly to the success of our deliberations. It is truly a privilege to find ourselves here in one of the most historical and stimulating cities in the world.

Since the last Divisional meeting in 1995, the world of aviation has changed dramatically. Global air transport is just now coming out of the worst turbulence in its history, brought about by the combined effects of the tragic events of 11 September 2001, a sharp slowdown in the global economy, and, more recently, the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in the Asia and Pacific Regions, which disrupted air transport in this part of the world. The world economy is now starting to recover. Trade and industrial production are improving across major regions, and the Asia and Pacific Regions specifically have regained some of their economic strength. Air traffic volumes have continued to grow despite some recent temporary setbacks and we can expect annual growth of some 4 per cent in 2004 and a gradual return to traditional growth patterns in 2005 and beyond.

Sustained recovery in air transport depends on economic performance and the absence of further acts of illegal interference upon civil aviation. On this second point, we recognize that national security challenges have become exceedingly more complex. In addition to the traditional threats of smuggling, illegal immigration document fraud and aircraft hijacking, we must learn to manage new and emerging threats posed by international terrorism, such as using aircraft as weapons of mass destruction or trying to bring them down with man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS).

On many occasions, I have mentioned that consideration should be given to the concept of establishing a universal regime of control for MANPADS, inspired by the one we succeeded in establishing for plastic explosives in 1991. I also have emphasized that ICAO and the United Nations should cooperate closely on establishing such a regime. As Member States are urgently seeking ways to make their borders stronger and civil aviation safer, building consensus to achieve global harmonization and interoperability is more critical than ever. Although it may seem attractive in the short term, I believe that States should resist the temptation to introduce new security requirements unilaterally, without fully recognizing their impact on systems in other States. An effective global security net can only be built on a global basis, link by link, ensuring that even the weakest of those links is strong enough to deter terrorists.

That is where the Facilitation Division can play a strategic role of uniting the world aviation community in singleness of purpose. As participants in the Division, you represent a wide array of disciplines – civil aviation policy, customs, immigration, passports, quarantine, public health, to name only a few. All of you are concerned about or work with control measures, and the objective of these controls is security of some type; security of your nation's borders; security of your revenue stream; security of your airport buildings and your aircraft; and of course, security of the people and goods that are carried in the air transport system. These are vital aspects of our global society. At the same time, we all share in a common business objective, to deliver the air transport product safely and on time. We therefore are obliged to do everything we can to improve both the efficiency and the effectiveness of the

control measures we design and implement. Your mission over the next few days is to develop, agree on, and recommend standards for such measures and procedures, so that we may achieve ever greater interoperability on a global scale.

The recommendations you are called on to make are of two types. A-type recommendations, for amendments to standards and recommended practices in Annex 9, will go through the customary ICAO process for updating Annexes to become part of the next edition of Annex 9. B-type recommendations, for actions other than amendments to the Annex, will go through a shorter process for adoption by the Council. The composite set of A- and B-type recommendations will become the basis for ICAO policy and for the direction of the facilitation programme for the next decade.

You have a challenging task ahead. In the present climate of intensified security controls, sustaining a viable air transport product calls for new approaches to border control and aviation security. Without a doubt the world has become more dangerous, but congestion, lengthy processing times, long lines, confusion and disorder are counterproductive in the quest for optimum security. The world is looking to ICAO for direction and solutions, and this session will help to refine that direction and specify those solutions.

Discussions undoubtedly will focus on technology and the Internet. These remarkable tools have already changed considerably the way we work in the field of facilitation. The question for States is no longer whether to adopt information technology in their inspection operations, but rather how, and at what speed it can be integrated. High-quality, machine readable travel documents (MRTDs) enhanced with biometric identification have become essential to security, to anti-terrorism, as well as to facilitation worldwide.

The magnitude of the challenge also is daunting. In 2003, the world's airlines carried more than 1.6 billion passengers and approximately 30 million tonnes of freight on their scheduled services. How can we develop a "smart system" to facilitate the flow of traffic at airports, "smart security control", and "smart screening", while avoiding procedures that some people may find degrading? Can we find an appropriate balance between privacy and security? How can we best share approaches and information about and with each other? The fact that we are asking ourselves these questions is a reflexion of the growing intricacies and scope of civil aviation. We can no longer confine our thinking to existing structures and working methods. The time has come to forge new relationships with governments, industry, academia, and other representatives of civil society, in order to raise aviation safety and security to even higher levels.

For 60 years, under the leadership of ICAO, the Member States of the Organization and other members of the world aviation community have worked together diligently to create a safe and secure global air transport system and to ensure that movements across international boundaries take place as efficiently as possible. Your collective responsibility in this Division is to continue this work and to establish new standards and far-sighted policies that will facilitate the flow of traffic at airports, limit or avoid disruptions to passengers, and deal effectively with any and all new threats to the safety and security of international civil aviation.