

**Address by His Excellency Dr. Atef Ebeid
The Prime Minister of Egypt
At the Opening Ceremony of
The 12th Session of the Facilitation Division**

22 March 2004

Distinguished Guests of Egypt,

Dear brothers and sisters attending this gracious gathering,

I welcome you on the land of Egypt, the land of peace, stability and safety.

I welcome you in the name of the government and people of Egypt which founded the most ancient civilization and knew the earliest means of mass transport and secured passage on its territory for people, goods and facilitated contacts over thousands of years.

We receive and welcome you most warmly as friends who appreciate your mission for the progress of mankind and establishing bridges of understanding among peoples. We receive and welcome you most warmly under the umbrella of ICAO, one of the long-established organizations the efforts of which we endorse and support for the achievement of constructive cooperation among its bodies that operate in the field of air transport.

In my name and on behalf of the Government of Egypt, I address our thanks to ICAO and to all of you for selecting Egypt as venue for convening your Meeting this year. Such selection is a manifestation of your appreciation of Egypt's role, at present and in the future, in the promotion of our common endeavour and in our planning for addressing the ever increasing and ever growing challenges of the future.

The first and foremost of such challenges is to achieve a continuous modernization in effective systems for combating terrorism.

Terrorism is the principal enemy of the aviation industry with all its components: aircraft, air navigation systems and airports. It is the most dangerous enemy of economic and social development, not only in the developing world but also in the developed world. The testimony of this is quite clear: one incident occurring in any part of the planet will necessarily have an impact on the volume of global demand for air transport, tourism and the complementary systems for a long period of time.

We all know that confronting this challenge is not an easy task. It indeed requires continuous efforts to develop screening technologies and tools, constant training of all flight crews and airport personnel, enhancement of the power of observation and vigilance, as well as strict adherence to working as part of a team.

Addressing this challenge on a global basis, however, has created a new challenge, i.e. to find an appropriate mechanism for cooperation between the entities in charge of ensuring passenger safety and security in flight and from the point of departure to destination, that is from the point of taking the decision to travel by air until arrival at the place of stay at the country of destination.

The responsibility here is shared between several bodies that operate in different locations. It inevitably requires that they should be in constant contact. If globalization has become a slogan for trade liberalization, it is all the more necessary to insure the safe conduct of global aviation.

The second challenge that we all face resides in the ever increasing capital investment in aircraft; aircraft and part prices and routine maintenance costs are all rising in an unprecedented and unstoppable manner. This has occurred as an inevitable result of the successive technological developments as have been imposed by the environment of competition which is witnessing new techniques for insuring safety and comfort of passengers and fuel saving measures. This challenge necessitates that we should conduct, through your Organization, a continuous dialogue with the major aircraft manufactures and financing institutions in the hope of reaching a formula that strikes a balance between growing demand and the burdens arising there from.

The third challenge that we all face is that the aviation sector must undertake a crucial role in the development of many activities that either complement or rely on aviation. The world scene has witnessed considerable creativity and innovations in the types, management systems and marketing approaches of such activities. We look forward to your Organization in order to familiarize us with the new developments in this field and provide us with information on the institutions that are involved with implementation and management.

The fourth challenge which is imposed upon us by the security and technology developments is the ability to create and train the necessary human resources that are capable of absorbing and interacting with the innovations, evaluate their own performance and be accountable for their actions in order to avoid incidence or recurrence of errors.

Personnel training institutions are costly undertakings and their costs are increasing from day to day. Therefore, we need to consult on the appropriate methods to join in partnerships to establish such institutions with the purpose of offering services to many of the participating parties which should be committed, a priori, to cost sharing.

Brothers and sisters attending this gracious gathering,

We in Egypt recognize the importance of participating with the rest of the world in addressing these challenges, out of our conviction that the air transport sector represents one of the most promising and effective sectors that contribute to development in Egypt.

We have ambitious goals. One of these emanates from the propitious geographical position of Egypt close to Europe, its temperate weather, wonderful clean beaches and the friendliness of its people as manifested in their natural hospitality and pleasurable service.

We hope to make of Egypt a second residence for retirees from our partners in Europe so that they may come and reside in our tourist villages for long periods each year. We are confident of our ability to offer the services at favourable rates in relation to their income and at standards that exceed their expectations.

An ambition that is no less important is to turn many of the Egyptian airports into hubs for redistribution of passengers and cargo and for refueling and catering.

We are planning to build several modern cargo villages to be affiliated with a number of international airports (Cairo, Alexandria, Luxor, Aswan and others).

We are planning to build an aeronautical sciences community that includes a number of institutes, training schools and workshops as well as research organizations. This will be incorporated with "the smart village" including various communications and information companies.

We are planning and are implementing many extensions in our major airports to cope with the current and expected increase in passenger and cargo traffic.

In all phases of these projects, we need to benefit from the experience of those who preceded us. We continue to invest in feasibility studies, emphasizing distinct design and effective implementation, using joint management or foreign management approaches to achieve the best return on invested capital.

Brothers and sisters attending this gracious gathering,

I welcome you once again and look forward to benefiting from your recommendations. We wish your Meeting great success and we wish you a happy stay.

God bless.

Thank you.