

**Message from the President of the Council of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Dr. Assad Kotaite,
for the worldwide celebration of
International Civil Aviation Day on 7 December 2001**

Dialogue is the basis for understanding and friendship among individuals and peoples of the world. When combined with face to face exchanges, its full potential is realized.

In our modern, fast-paced world, civil aviation is the only mode of mass transportation that permits such personal communications amongst all of us, wherever we may be around the world. One need only imagine a life without air travel to grasp how critical it has become to the evolution of individuals and to the evolution of our global society.

Over the past half century, we have developed a global air transport system that is remarkably safe by any measure. In the year 2000, there were some 22 million flights worldwide on scheduled carriers and only 18 fatal accidents. Out of more than 1.6 billion passengers, 755 persons lost their lives. Every loss of life is deeply regrettable, yet aviation safety is as close to perfect as it has ever been.

The tragic events of 11 September in the United States plunged us into an unfamiliar and troubling reality. They have shaken consumer confidence in a system that nevertheless remains strong and resilient.

We must and we will restore confidence in air travel, in part because global air transport is a driver of economic development, a catalyst for business and tourism, and a vehicle for social and cultural development worldwide, yet primarily because of its ability to bring people together.

We must and we will remain vigilant and steadfast in our determination to provide citizens of the world with the safest and most efficient civil aviation system possible, while protecting the system against new and unexpected forms of man-induced threats.

The 21st century holds great promise, as long as we can protect what seems to me as the inherent right and need of human beings to be with those whom they love and cherish, and to make new friends and acquaintances among the inhabitants of our shrinking planet.

For almost half a century now, I have seen the world aviation community meet successfully every challenge that has come its way. I am convinced we will do so again. And the power of aviation to bring people together in constructive dialogue will prove once again to be its greatest asset.