

**ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE AIR TRANSPORT BUREAU
OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION (ICAO)
MR. MOHAMED ELAMIRI
TO THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON ARAB AVIATION SECURITY**

(Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 7 February 2006)

It is a pleasure and an honour for me to address the distinguished participants at this International Conference on Arab Aviation Security. I take this opportunity to convey the best wishes of our Secretary General, Dr. Taïeb Chérif, who unfortunately could not be present due to previous commitments.

Any discussion of aviation security necessarily brings to mind the events of 11 September 2001 when, for the first time in history, aircraft were used as weapons of mass destruction. This tragedy triggered a universal response barely two weeks later when the 33rd Session of the ICAO Assembly initiated immediate action, including the review of existing security Standards contained in Annex 17 on Security.

The Assembly also convened a High-level, Ministerial Conference on Aviation Security for February of 2002, with an overall objective of preventing, combating and eradicating terrorism involving civil aviation, restoring public confidence in air travel and promoting the health of the air transport industry.

That historic Conference unanimously endorsed an ICAO Plan of Action for Strengthening Aviation Security, later approved by the Council of ICAO. A major component of the Plan is a programme of regular, mandatory, systematic and harmonized audits to evaluate aviation security in all 189 Member States of ICAO and to help identify and correct deficiencies in the implementation of ICAO security-related standards. The Universal Security Audit Programme, or USAP, began in November 2002 and, as of today, 109 States have been audited. In the Middle East region, 13 States have been audited under the programme – including our Conference host State – the United Arab Emirates, just last November. We have also initiated, in 2005, a programme of follow-up visits in order to verify the level of implementation of State corrective action plans. The very existence of the audit programme is visibly improving global aviation security as States become increasingly sensitized to international requirements and strive to be in compliance with Annex 17.

Fundamental to the success of the Plan of Action is the synergy between USAP, the ICAO Aviation Security (AVSEC) Mechanism and technical cooperation projects. The AVSEC Mechanism is designed to assist States in achieving compliance with Annex 17 Standards through training and direct assistance to States. The AVSEC Mechanism also provides for the development of aviation security training packages, the utilization of the worldwide network of aviation security training centres and immediate assistance to rectify urgent deficiencies. More long-term assistance through technical cooperation projects is available to States audited by USAP when implementing their national AVSEC Plan of Action, especially those who lack the required human or financial resources. Ensuring coordination between the USAP, the AVSEC Mechanism and the technical cooperation projects implies a cohesive, logical and harmonized approach, strengthening each element of the process, from auditing to the implementation of corrective measures.

The world community has made remarkable progress, through global cooperation, in containing acts of terrorism against civil aviation. In 2005, no hijacking was reported nor was there any act of unlawful interference against a commercial aircraft, although there were acts perpetrated against other elements of the air transport system.

In the long term, the global strategy for aviation will focus on three critical areas:

- First, to diligently assess new and emerging threats to aviation security so as to develop an ability to initiate pre-emptive measures relative to airports, aircraft and air traffic control systems.
- Second, to continually monitor and upgrade existing security processes to ensure they are commensurate with the level of threat identified.
- And third, to expedite the clearance of passengers while at the same time maintaining the highest level of security. Measures to facilitate the flow of passengers and goods must be effective, internationally coordinated, and applied with the greatest possible consideration for passenger convenience.

The legal dimension of the security challenge will need close scrutiny.

Throughout your discussions on aviation security in the coming days, you may find it useful to keep in mind the major elements of the Final Declaration to the High-level Ministerial Conference of 2002. For example,

- The Declaration stresses the pre-eminence of safety and security as key elements of civil aviation. Any breach of security can very easily become a safety issue.
- The Declaration reaffirms the responsibility of States for the security and the safety of civil aviation, irrespective of whether the air transport and related services concerned are provided by Government, autonomous or private entities.
- The Declaration recognizes that a uniform approach in a global system is essential to ensure aviation security throughout the world and that deficiencies in any part of the system constitute a threat to the entire global system. Accordingly, the Declaration affirms that a global aviation security system imposes a collective responsibility on all States to ensure that the entire system is secure.

Our collective resolve should therefore be to create a security net which is global in nature and so tight that not one further potential act of unlawful interference can slip through.

Achieving that goal requires effective and proactive cooperation at every level. I have just described the numerous measures that have been taken and are being initiated at the global level. And I commend all Arab States for their unfailing support of these programmes and activities.

Cooperation on a regional level is also essential. It has already proven its worth in Asia, Europe and North America, where aviation security mechanisms were established to foster dialogue among the member States, in an effort to protect and advance their aviation security interests. This practice can further shield and protect a region's aircraft and airport operators and travellers from undue harm. Regional aviation security groupings also ensure a strong regional presence and voice in international aviation security circles.

ICAO would encourage the creation of such an aviation security cooperation mechanism among Arab States. The process could begin with the formation of an Arab aviation security team of specialists that would function as the advisory aviation security arm to the Arab Civil Aviation Commission. This would require reaching a formal understanding by the Arab Directors General of civil aviation on a protocol to establish such a regional cooperation mechanism.

There is no doubt, as I mentioned earlier, that this would greatly enhance the participation and contribution of the Arab States within the international aviation security community.

In conclusion, optimum aviation security is based on effective, sustained global and regional cooperation among all States. This commitment recognizes that civil aviation is a fundamental feature of today's global society in terms of economic, social and cultural development. We all share in a collective responsibility to protect this extraordinary instrument of human advancement.

I thank you for your kind attention and I wish you every success in your deliberations.

— END —