Remarks by the
Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Dr. Fang Liu,
ICAO Regional Safety Management Symposium
European and North Atlantic Region (EUR/NAT)

(Tallinn, Estonia, 16 October 2017)

Distinguished Ministers,
Friends and colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1.   It is a great honour to open this Regional Safety Management Symposium, and to provide a few observations today on *The Journey to Achieving Effective Safety Management*.

2.   Safety is indeed a journey, and from the cockpit to the ICAO Council Chamber it is always a fundamental priority in our global community.

3.   But before we begin to review aviation's recent and quite significant safety progress, as well as some of the challenges you're facing here in ICAO's European and North Atlantic Region, let me please convey my deep gratitude to the European Commission and to the Estonian Presidency of the European Union, for these excellent facilities and the very warm welcome we've received here in Tallinn.

4.   It's my pleasure to address you today against the backdrop of an extremely encouraging achievement within our global aviation network.

5.   In 2016, at the global level, only 2.1 accidents per million departures were recorded. This is a 25% improvement versus our 2015 results, but more remarkably it is also the lowest accident rate ever recorded.

6. Achievements of this nature do not simply happen, of course. They are the result of comprehensive strategic planning, programmes designed using data-driven targets informed by effective monitoring, and in the end through the concerted international cooperation and coordination for which our sector is so renowned.

7. To put this more simply: our accident rate is no accident.

8. As we continue to make significant progress in aviation safety, we must also recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to the effective implementation of State Safety Programmes (SSPs) and Safety Management Systems (SMS).

9. This is why, on our journey to achieving effective safety management, I would call on you to stay focused on the concept of 'scalability'.

10. This entails that each State or service provider must have the flexibility to customize their SSP or SMS approaches to best fit their organization.

11. It also requires that we maintain focus on the outcomes we are trying to achieve, without being overly prescriptive.

12. Another important priority in this regard is the nature of the relationship between the State and its service providers. This must eventually evolve beyond compliance and enforcement, and toward a non-punitive partnership which encourages openness, promotes reporting, and is founded on the principles of continuous improvement.

13. Although we have made good progress in the implementation of safety management, I would suggest that there are still advances to be made in managing the risks that can be transmitted via the interfaces between service providers.

14. This is the case across our sector, as well as between its different domains, such as safety, security, environmental protection and finance.

15.   Lastly I would also call upon aviation leaders to be actively involved in identifying what questions they need answered in order to optimally manage their safety data analysis and safety performance monitoring.

16.   This helps to ensure that all related results support the data-driven decision making which is at the very heart of these approaches.

17.   Regional strategies for effective safety management can be very helpful to both State and industry SMS stakeholders. Most aspects of safety management development are progressing well, but we need to assess what has been put in place and ask whether it is working effectively.

18.   At the global level, two areas of focus are defined in the ICAO Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP): the implementation of SARPs, _and_ the use of risk assessment processes by all States.

19.   The formal way to achieve this is through the SMS/SSP framework, and ICAO's Regional Aviation Safety Groups (RASGs) are seen as key players to assist States in achieving the GASP goals.

20.   A main tenet of effective safety management requires that the identification of global priorities evolves away from reactive analyses based solely on accidents and fatalities, and toward assessments based on _risks and potential for fatalities_.

21.   In order to achieve this effectively, access to safety information by States and services providers should be improved, and the exchange and sharing of relevant data encouraged.

22.   This exchange and sharing is further predicated on safety data protection principles, as per the provisions of Annex 19 to the Convention.

23.   Here in the ICAO European and North Atlantic Region, we are faced with a complex portrait of safety capability and performance.

24.   On the one hand, your region accounts for 32 per cent of the global accident total, while being responsible for only 25 per cent of global traffic. But at the same time the average effective implementation of ICAO SARPs by EURNAT States is approximately 75 per cent, which is more than 10 percentage points above the current global average.

25. These contrasting results point to the tremendous diversity among EURNAT's 56 States, and reflects the complexity of a region that stretches from Greenland to Kamchatka. They also point to the need for even closer collaboration in the future.

26. Our EURNAT Regional Office in Paris plays a key role in this dynamic, providing and coordinating targeted assistance to needful EURNAT Member States through ICAO No Country Left Behind Campaign and by using established European Regional Aviation Safety Group (RASG-EUR) mechanisms.

27. This coordination facilitates cooperation while avoiding costly duplication of effort.

28. ICAO's Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme, USOAP, also has a very important role to play here, whether in terms of identifying key areas needing attention or recognizing those States which have made exemplary progress on their safety oversight commitments.

29. The variations it has identified with respect to the level of maturity of SSP implementation in EURNAT States provides a good starting point for further cooperation activities, and these efforts should be streamlined through the ICAO Safety Management Programme, and implemented your European Regional Aviation Safety Group.

30. For those EURNAT States with mature safety oversight capabilities, the implementation of your State Safety Programs should be your next priority, as directed by the GASP.

31. And with respect to future cooperation, we are already seeing helpful progress on cybersecurity and its impact on safety, as well as pilot mental health – two areas of particular pertinence here. I would encourage you to place even more focus on these priorities and to continue delivering solid results.

32. Fortunately, the diversity of ICAO's EURNAT region and the challenges it faces is matched only by the diversity of the highly-talented professionals who have gathered here, in Tallinn, to discuss these pressing issues.

33. I am confident that your discussions today and tomorrow will result in the realization of new enhancements to the management of aviation safety here, and I will look forward to reviewing the results of your work together.

34.   Thank you, and may I wish you all a very productive and though-provoking Symposium.