



**ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION (ICAO),
DR. TAÏEB CHÉRIF,
TO THE FIRST MIDDLE EAST AVIATION SAFETY SUMMIT**

(Abu Dhabi, 21 and 22 January 2008)

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

We meet here in Abu Dhabi at a time when the world enjoys one of the safest periods in the history of air transport. We have every reason to be satisfied with our collective efforts. As we look to the future, however, we clearly have a tremendous challenge ahead of us.

Airport and airspace congestion in certain parts of the world are currently stretching air navigation and ground facilities to the limit. Moreover, air traffic is forecast to increase at an average annual global rate of 5.8 per cent over the next three years, with double-digit figures expected in high density areas, and this will only increase pressure on human and technical resources.

What we have done in the past has worked well, but we now need new approaches to make a safe system even safer. I therefore commend the timely and comprehensive initiative of this Summit to formulate a safety action plan based on the Global Aviation Safety Roadmap developed by the Industry Safety Strategy Group (ISSG), in cooperation with ICAO. This will make it possible for the Middle East Region to ensure that its aviation industry maintains an enviable safety record and growth rate, and firmly establishes itself as a strong partner within the world air transport community.

The present Summit is also an opportunity to reinforce a basic tenet of the Roadmap and of the ICAO philosophy, that of partnership among all stakeholders – States, regulators, aircraft and airport operators, air traffic services providers, aircraft manufacturers, international organizations and safety organizations. The Roadmap defines roles played by the regulatory and industry elements, and presents a common frame of reference for achieving specific goals.

The value of the Roadmap was enhanced when it was fully integrated earlier this year into the ICAO Global Aviation Safety Plan, the GASP. Together, the two documents are a unique and pragmatic resource for maintaining and improving safety worldwide. In effect, the GASP can now be seen as a proactive planning methodology for ICAO, States, regions and the industry to fulfil, in a complementary manner, the requirements listed in the Roadmap. The GASP also establishes a coordination mechanism to ensure that the Roadmap and the GASP are kept up-to-date in a synchronized manner.

In your discussions over the next two days, I invite you to be guided by the basic principles contained in ICAO's Safety Plan. They reflect both the universality and harmonisation promulgated by ICAO for more than 60 years and the pragmatic practices adopted by the industry worldwide.

First and foremost is the consistent application of ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices, SARPs. This involves both States and the industry. As Members of ICAO, States are committed to the implementation of SARPs, and the industry has a legal, commercial and moral obligation to ensure that operations are conducted in accordance with regulations.

Second, each State must ensure consistent regulatory oversight. It must be able to objectively evaluate any given safety critical aviation activity within its jurisdiction and require that the activity adhere to standards. These Regulatory Authorities must be independent, competent and adequately funded, and there must be an independent mechanism to monitor the Authority's competency. Industry must also put in place independent assessment and regular audits to promote full compliance with regulatory requirements.

Third is transparency and sharing of information, which is fundamental to improved safety. There must be a free flow of data that cuts across all levels of State and industry organizations. These efforts should be integrated into regional and international data reporting systems. There is much to be gained by sharing experience between regions and industry sectors, such as the widespread and timely adoption of best practices and the alignment of safety strategies.

Finally, the GASP calls for regulatory authorities and industry to make sure that they have access to a sufficient number of qualified staff to support their activity, that they promote technological development to enhance safety and that Safety Management Systems (SMS) are mandated across all sectors and disciplines. As we have come to understand, a systematic management of the risks associated with flight operations, aerodrome ground operations, air traffic management and aircraft engineering or maintenance activities is essential to achieve high levels of safety performance.

Are the Roadmap and the GASP ambitious? Yes, they are and they must be. As good as it was, the traditional approach to aviation safety is gradually yielding diminishing returns in terms of time and resources invested. The time has come to develop and *quickly implement* new strategies.

For its part, ICAO has progressively reorganized itself under a new results-based management framework so that the Organization continues to become more performance driven and responsive to the needs of States and the industry. ICAO is more focused on results and better equipped to assume our leadership position in the global quest for continued improvements, not only in safety but in security, environmental protection and the continued streamlining of the technical and administrative complexity of the global air transport system.

For everyone represented at this Summit, safety is clearly the top priority. With the tremendous efforts being made by all stakeholders, as markets expand and grow, ICAO is committed to providing global leadership and coordination through the GASP and other safety initiatives. Transparency, political will and a proactive approach, coalescing under a spirit of global cooperation, represent our best guarantee for success for reaching our common safety goals.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of the United Arab Emirates and the Industry Safety Strategy Group (ISSG) for their support of this important meeting. I particularly wish to recognize the efforts and valuable contribution of Mr. Jalal Haidar, Representative of the UAE on the Council of ICAO, who has been instrumental in the promotion of aviation safety and security initiatives worldwide, and especially in Africa at the recent *Conference on the Development of the African Aviation Security Roadmap* in Addis Ababa in November 2007 and at the upcoming *African Aviation Safety Summit* to be held in April in Nigeria.

I wish you all a most productive Summit!