



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION (ICAO),
DR. TAÏEB CHÉRIF,
TO THE CONFERENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF
THE AFRICAN AVIATION SECURITY ROADMAP**

(Addis Ababa, 5-7 November 2007)

His Excellency Girma WoldeGeorgis, President of the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia; His Excellency Juneydi Saddo, Minister of Transport, Ethiopia; His Excellency Dr. Bernard Zoba, Commissioner, Infrastructure and Energy, African Union, and Mr. C.A. Kuto, President of AFCAC. I am honoured to be with you today and sincerely appreciate your participation in this highly important conference.

I would first like to commend African Ministers responsible for air transport in Africa for the comprehensive and thought-provoking Declaration of 11 May 2007 on aviation security. The Declaration underscored three fundamental principles highly relevant to the theme of this Conference.

First, it recognized the need to respond firmly and effectively to ever changing threats to the security of aviation. Second, it expressed concern about important weaknesses in the aviation security infrastructure on the continent. Third, it acknowledged the role of leadership, coordination, harmonization, facilitation and advocacy in creating a solid aviation security framework, while insisting on cooperation in establishing or strengthening institutional coordination on continental, regional and national levels.

Above all, in my opinion, the Declaration is a pledge by regulators, industry, services providers and other interested stakeholders to work together towards the development of an efficient aviation security mechanism for the whole of Africa.

At the Plenary of the African Civil Aviation Commission in July, I endorsed those principles with a call to ensure the integration of African initiatives into efforts aimed at reinforcing the security of the global air transport system. Clearly, we share the same views and today begin the process of translating that commitment into concrete action. We now pass from free-flowing concepts to the reality of terrorism, budgets and the very legitimate expectations of potential partners and the travelling public. It is imperative that over the next three days the conference comes up with specific measures that will convince the world aviation community of Africa's determination to address head on the security challenges it faces.

I would suggest that the heart of an effective plan of action is a thorough understanding and recognition of the nature and scope of the problem. A starting point can be found in the results of the ICAO Universal Security Audit Programme which centre around the lack of proper legislation, regulations and infrastructure, as well as the inability to retain qualified personnel. As of today, nearly all African States have been audited by ICAO and now possess a report outlining known deficiencies to their security systems and ICAO recommendations for their rectification.

In theory, addressing identified deficiencies should be enough to correct the situation. Over the years, however, we learned that prescriptive solutions did not always work. We need to understand where we have failed in order to come up with the right remedy. For that, we need to get to the root of the problem. It is this fundamental shift in perspective that led ICAO to create, in June of this year, an Implementation Support and Development programme - ISD.

The primary objectives of the new ISD Programme are :

- to support Member States with significant and persistent deficiencies in the implementation of their aviation safety and security obligations;
- facilitate and coordinate the provision of assistance provided by States, industry, international financial institutions and other stakeholders, and;
- participate in safety and security implementation support and development activities aimed at enhancing the capabilities of States to meet their aviation safety and security obligations.

At first glance, this may seem overwhelming but we do have an excellent model upon which to base our actions. It is the Comprehensive Regional Implementation Plan for Africa, also known to many of you as the AFI Plan. For the benefit of those not familiar with this recent initiative, I would like to provide a brief description of its main features, as they may prove useful in your deliberations.

The AFI Plan deals with complex economic and political issues in a holistic manner. It promotes greater coordination of ICAO safety-related programmes and projects with those of national and regional organizations in Africa, as well as industry and international bodies concerned. Implementation of the Plan will be coordinated by ICAO Headquarters and Regional Offices in coordination with, and with support from, AFCAC, APIRG and the African Union and other regional bodies such as the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC).

I am happy to say that the AFI Plan was enthusiastically endorsed at a high-level meeting of African officials held at ICAO on 17 September, with a strong commitment to its goals and objectives. This is what we want to achieve in the field of security: a comprehensive, cooperative and coordinated approach to rectifying identified security problems in Africa.

There are obvious parallels between these safety and security initiatives. In both cases, following through on your stated collective commitment is absolutely essential. Ideally, you will at the end of this conference not only lay the ground for the development of a roadmap for an integrated aviation security system in Africa, you will also clearly determine the way forward. This might be expressed through the establishment of a continent-wide Aviation Security Steering Committee to initiate the work, but with explicitly defined responsibilities. If you take this route, ICAO is prepared to provide you with administrative support through its Regional Offices.

Above all, I might suggest, it is imperative that you speak with one voice. Individual governments are responsible and accountable for security in their territory, but terrorism knows no boundaries. It is a regional and a global phenomenon. The African Region can best contribute to raising the level of security here and around the world by cooperating in identifying common problems and establishing common goals for Africa. I believe that effectiveness is in direct relation to the scope and depth of regional cooperation and cohesiveness, to build trust among African Member States and inspire confidence with outside stakeholders and donors. If I may paraphrase a well-known expression, the time has come to think regionally while acting locally.

The bottom line is that it is up to Africa to take the initiative and the rest of the world to help it achieve its objectives. I assure you that if you commit to action, ICAO and the rest of the world will help you to carry it out.

I conclude with an invitation to meet one year from now, in Africa, to review our progress in developing a roadmap for aviation security in Africa. I thank you for your kind attention and wish all participants a most productive conference.