**ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION (ICAO),
DR. TAÏEB CHÉRIF,
TO THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL ARAB CIVIL AVIATION
SECURITY CONFERENCE**

**(Jeddah, 26-28 March 2007)**

Distinguished Delegates,
Dear Guests,

I am honoured to be with you today and wish to express my deepest respect and appreciation to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Sultan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and Aviation, and Inspector General of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who has sponsored this Second International Arab Civil Aviation Security Conference. I also wish to express my thanks to the President of the General Authority of Civil Aviation of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Eng. Abdullah Rehaimy, who courteously invited me to the Conference and gave me the opportunity to address this distinguished audience. Most importantly, I am delighted to take part in this meeting, which marks the second Arab regional effort, initiated last year in Abu Dhabi, in partnership with ICAO, the UAE General Civil Aviation Authority, and the Arab Civil Aviation Commission, and with the support and cooperation of several regional aviation bodies and ICAO member States. This initiative should continue to ensure institutional planning and approach to resolving the aviation security challenges and threats facing the world. It should also more closely align the objectives and activities of ACAC States with those of the international aviation security community.

Air transport is a driver of economic development, a catalyst for business and tourism, and vehicle for social and cultural development worldwide. Aviation security is fundamental to the health and growth of air transport around the world. This basic premise was graphically demonstrated with the tragic events of 11 September 2001 in the United States of America. In the wake of the terrorist attacks using aircraft as weapons of destruction, the air transport and aerospace industries went into a tailspin that lasted for several years.

The very nature of aviation makes it attractive to terrorists' attacks. First and foremost, it is a high profile sector. Second, aviation is highly vulnerable. In certain parts of the world where security is lax, terrorists can board an aircraft and attack a target halfway across the globe. Airports are open to the public and represent easy targets. Attacking satellite communications necessary for air navigation systems could jeopardize the lives of both passengers and people on the ground in many areas simultaneously. Overall, threats can migrate quickly from one part of the globe to another with little or no warning.

Under the leadership of ICAO the world community has made remarkable progress, through global cooperation, in containing acts of terrorism against civil aviation. Our determination to maintain the highest level of aviation security was evident from the opening day of the 33rd Session of the ICAO Assembly, held just two weeks after the events of 11 September 2001. The Assembly was attended by a record 1130 participants from 169 Contracting States and 32 international civil aviation organizations. It initiated immediate action, including the review of existing security standards contained in Annex 17 to the *Convention on International Civil Aviation*, the charter of ICAO. Annex 17 on Security deals with safeguarding international civil aviation against acts of unlawful interference.

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

That historic Conference was attended by participants from 154 States and 24 international organizations who unanimously endorsed an *ICAO Plan of Action for Strengthing 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 190 Member States of ICAO and to help identify and correct deficiencies in the implementation of ICAO security-related standards. The Universal Security Audit Programme (USAP) began in November of 2002 and as of today a total of 159 States had been audited. The USAP, has not only helped the world aviation community to determine the level of compliance with ICAO Annex 17, but it further helps States to further understand and address their needs to remedy deficiencies and establish grounds for institutional aviation security infrastructure. As a result, ICAO launched the Coordinated Assistance and Development Program.

Fundamental to the success of the Plan of Action is the synergy between USAP, the ICAO Aviation Security Mechanism, the Coordinated Assistance and Development Programme and technical cooperation projects, to assist States in achieving compliance with Annex 17 standards through technical assessments, training and direct assistance to States. Under the provisions of assistance, ICAO further provides for the development of aviation security training packages, the utilization of the worldwide network of sixteen 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 Coordinated Assistance and Development and technical cooperation projects implies a cohesive, logical and harmonized approach, strengthening each element of the process, from auditing to the implementation of corrective measures and institutional development.

In the longer term, the global strategy will focus on three critical areas.

The first is to diligently assess new and emerging threats to aviation security, to be able to initiate pre-emptive measures relative to airports, aircraft and air traffic control systems.

The second is to continually monitor and upgrade existing security processes to ensure they are commensurate with the level of threat identified, always keeping in mind the three elements of our strategy, again - preventing, combating and eradicating terrorism involving civil aviation, restoring public confidence in air travel and promoting the health of the air transport industry.

The third is to expedite the clearance of passengers at airports, while at the same time maintaining the highest level of security. Given the sustained growth in traffic worldwide, measures

must be effective, internationally coordinated, and applied with the greatest possible consideration for passenger convenience and efficiency of cargo transportation.

The legal dimension of the security challenge will also need close scrutiny. Over time, ICAO has established a universally-accepted international legal system so that no safe haven exists for the perpetrators of such acts of unlawful interference. However, with new types of threats such as those committed on 11 September, gaps and inadequacies appear to exist in the international aviation legal conventions. More study is needed with regard to potentially devastating attacks involving bacteriological, chemical or even nuclear substances, as well as electronic or computer-based attacks on air traffic control networks or aircraft. The legal conventions which aim at the repression of suicide attacks against civil aviation will not be effective against the suicide perpetrators themselves. Serious penalties should therefore be imposed on those organizing, instigating, sponsoring or financing such terrorist acts and harbouring terrorists themselves.

In our global effort to put an end to terrorism against civil aviation, we should continue to be guided by the final Declaration to the High-level Ministerial Conference of 2002 on security. It contains fundamental principles, including the following:

1. Safety and security are prerequisites for people to travel by air. No one wants to fly an unsafe airline, fly through unsafe skies or land at unsafe airports.

2. States are ultimately responsible 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.

3. A uniform and global approach is essential because, like a chain, the global air transport system is only as strong as its weakest link. States therefore have a collective responsibility as well as an individual responsibility.

4. Security measures must be implemented in a manner which is objective and non-discriminatory, irrespective of gender, race, religion or nationality.

In closing, civil aviation is a fundamental feature of today's global society. When the integrity of this global lifeline is threatened and confidence in its security is undermined nations must unite. The destructive and elusive nature of an adversary with potential to wreak great destruction warrants all the efforts and resources that our global society can muster.

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