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WORLDWIDE CONFERENCE ON AVIATION SAFETY, SECURITY AND THE
ENVIRONMENT – THE WAY FORWARD**

(Montreal, Saturday, 15 September 2007)

I am delighted to be with you this morning for the ICAO/McGill University Worldwide Conference on the theme of *Aviation safety, security and the environment: The way forward*.

This Conference is taking place just a few days before the 36th Session of the ICAO Assembly and I welcome the opportunity to share the views of the Organization on three subjects that will also be object of substantive discussions by the delegates from our 190 Contracting States and several international organizations.

I must say that I feel at home in a University setting. I was quite involved with the education system in my native country of Algeria and I value the productive synergy that can result from a meeting of the minds of academics, regulators and representatives of industry.

ICAO has had a long and productive relationship with McGill and particularly the Air & Space Law Institute. We have benefited from the close proximity to such a wealth of knowledge and we are grateful that many of our professional staff have been able to share their experience with McGill students as professors and lecturers.

I believe this provides a unique opportunity for discussion and action as we consider the crucial issues that confront the aviation community. One of them is undoubtedly the growth of the industry. Passenger traffic has grown every year except two over six decades and the forecast is for continued growth for the foreseeable future.

This creates new opportunities for economic and social development for developed and developing nations alike. What this conference and the ICAO Assembly next week are perhaps more interested in, however, are the challenges. The degree to which we manage growth effectively, uniformly and consistently will determine the level of safety, security, sustainability and efficiency of the global air transport system.

At ICAO, we have undertaken a major shift in addressing these challenges with a more focused and proactive approach based on four basic principles – implementation, performance, results and transparency. We are in fact transforming the Organization from a traditionally prescriptive-based, to a performance-based and results-oriented Organization.

Over the next few minutes, I would like to give you a few examples based on the theme of this conference: safety, security and the environment. I will begin with safety.

Safety

As you know, 2003 and 2004 are recognized as the safest years since the creation of ICAO in 1944. Six major accidents in August and September of 2005, however, reminded us that systemic deficiencies already identified under the ICAO Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) were still present. This prompted ICAO to suggest the convening of a Directors General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Conference to build consensus on a global strategy for aviation safety in the twenty first century.

The Conference was held in March 2006 and reaffirmed the critical importance of transparency and the sharing of safety-related information as fundamental tenets of a safe air transport system. It recognized that safety is a shared responsibility and that advancements in global safety are only possible through the leadership of ICAO and a cooperative, collaborative and coordinated effort among all stakeholders.

I emphasize transparency because it is becoming a prerequisite for further significant advances in aviation safety. We can best learn when we have access to the most recent, accurate and authoritative information available. When it comes to assistance, donors are now insisting on transparency before committing financial and human resources. Even though the phrase is well worn, I will paraphrase Victor Hugo in saying that transparency is an idea whose time has come, and it is proving to be very powerful indeed.

Security

For obvious reasons, the same cannot be said of aviation security. Our performance, however, mirrors that of safety. Statistics for the past few years point to a global air transport system that remains secure, in large part by the diligence of States and such initiatives as the ICAO Universal Security Audit Programme (USAP) created after the events of September 2001. The USAP has visibly improved aviation security as States have become more sensitized to international requirements in complying with the Standards in Annex 17 on Security of the Chicago Convention

Nevertheless, while aviation security improves, events such as the alleged terrorist plot in the United Kingdom in August 2006, potentially involving liquids used as explosives, remind us of the vulnerability of the system and of the need for constant vigilance. In this particular case, ICAO reacted in a rapid, proactive and cooperative manner by bringing together States concerned, law enforcement agencies and industry representatives to develop an effective response. A series of interim measures were issued and permanent guidelines, as well as a revised list of items which may not be brought on board aircraft will soon be published.

At ICAO, we are well aware of the challenges facing governments who implement anti-terrorist measures that are effective, yet safeguard the efficiency of air transport and public confidence in air travel. We will continue to work with States and the industry on adapting security-related methods and technologies to meet new and emerging threats, while at the same time facilitating the rapid and efficient flow of passengers through airports.

The Environment

Environmental protection is the third and final point of our discussion at this Conference. At the last meeting of the Council's Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP/7) in February of this year, it was evident that environmental concerns are now addressed by global aviation stakeholders in their action plans. It was generally agreed that solutions must and will come from the aviation sector.

Among the achievements of CAEP/7 was the introduction of medium and long-range goals in the development of technologies to control Nitrogen Oxide (NO_x). This will give industry more clearly defined objectives and a longer planning horizon. CAEP/7 also produced initial studies on the environmental benefits of operational procedures and, in relation to local air quality at airports, it proposed guidance on best practices to assess and quantify airport source emissions.

While improvements in technology and operational procedures are promising for additional emissions reductions, market-based solutions represent a very important part of the overall solution. As anticipated, CAEP/7 proposed wide-ranging guidance for incorporating international aviation emissions into national emissions trading schemes, consistent with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process. The Assembly will review these proposals, including the question of emissions-related levies probably the most contentious subject to be discussed at an Assembly in many years.

Before I conclude, I would like to suggest to this Conference that efficiency is the driver in safety and environmental issues. In this context, I recommend that when this meeting discusses these two areas, that it take into consideration the importance of efficiency in air transport.

The future

As you can see from my brief overview of our challenges and ICAO's responses, the way forward involves transparency, commitment to results and performance, and political will to provide the world with a global air transport system that is safe, secure and sustainable. ICAO is well prepared to provide the leadership necessary to reach these goals.

In the spirit of our long association and active involvement in each other's activities, I wish you a very productive conference and I look forward to the results of your deliberations as inspiration for our own discussions at the 36th Session of the ICAO Assembly.