

Your Excellencies,

Minister for Civil Aviation, Mr Yang Yuanyuan

Vice Minister for Civil Aviation, Mr Yang Guoqing

Mr Wang Ronghua, Director General of the Department of

International Affairs, General Administration of Civil

Aviation of China

Fellow Directors General

Industry Leaders

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am indeed delighted to be here in Shanghai, a metropolis of modernity, finance, art and culture. I have the greatest pleasure in conveying the warm greetings of the President of ICAO Council, Dr. Assad Kotaite, and the Secretary General, Dr Taieb Cherif, to Your Excellencies, the Ministers and to all the colleagues here in this distinguished gathering.

I join the Director of Air Transport Bureau, Mr. Mohamed Elamiri, in welcoming you to this very special event, the “ICAO

Symposium on Liberalization of Air Transport in Asia and Pacific – a Government Industry Dialogue”. This event is expected to imbibe in us a deeper and better understanding of the liberalization process and how its potential benefits may be harnessed and some of its pitfalls avoided.

As is well known, air transport is a driver of economic growth and development mainly through its support to trade and tourism. Air transport also plays a significant role in the mobility of people within and between countries and, as a result, contributes to the creation and the preservation of friendship and understanding among Nations as enshrined in the preamble of the Convention on International Civil Aviation. ICAO and Contracting States recognize these fundamentals and share a common objective in the safe and orderly development of international air transport on a sound economic basis.

This objective was a motivating force behind the fifth Worldwide Air Transport Conference held at ICAO Headquarters in Montreal in March 2003 when the Contracting States reaffirmed their collective, on-going commitment to the process of liberalization of

international air transport. That Conference resulted in considerable guidance and policy framework for liberalization and the Contracting States, in various ways, have been putting that guidance into effect in the intervening years.

It is the purpose of this Symposium to build on those outcomes and to provide a forum for exchanging views and experiences of liberalization, examining national and regional concerns and problems and considering different options and approaches to liberalization. You may wish to bear in mind that this event will be evaluated as the model for conducting similar symposiums in other ICAO Regions.

The Symposium is being convened in the spirit of a “government/industry dialogue” which has brought together the air transport policy makers and regulators, executives from airlines and airports, and other industry stakeholders. We look forward to open discussion of the pressing, topical and future issues in air transport regulation affecting this Region.

Speaking of pressing topical issues - a very important aspect that comes to the forefront is the rising gap between the prolific growth of aircraft operators and the gravely concerning, very slow growth of human resources to meet the needs of governments and industry. Organisation, regulations, expertise, training, skills to oversee safety and security are some of the aspects with which many States are still struggling in many instances, to simply find their way.

Obviously, all of us must take pride in the fact that passenger fatality figures for 2004 are the lowest since 1945. Because of the significantly lower number of passenger fatalities in 2004 and the significant increase in total scheduled passenger traffic, the accident rate for scheduled air services (measured in passenger fatalities per 100 million passenger kilometres) decreased from approximately 0.015 in 2003 to about 0.005 in 2004. Globally speaking, these figures speak remarkably well for safety of air transport as a whole. But regionally speaking, Asia/Pacific, particularly the Asian part is very much in the spot light -- the gap I alluded to earlier seems to be increasing rapidly in our part of the

globe - and that is why this dialogue between the Industry and the Regulators offers a rare opportunity to have a real-time understanding of the situation in the context of a liberalized air transport industry.

It is our hope that this enables participants to gain a better understanding of the regulators and the regulated, and learn about different policy options and approaches. We believe that this can be particularly useful for government decision makers in developing a well-informed, more coherent and balanced policy for the benefit of all of the stakeholders in international air transport.

Accordingly, this Symposium has been organized in close cooperation with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and participation was invited from all sectors of the aviation industry with interests in air transport regulatory policy. We acknowledge with much gratitude the support of our host, the General Administration of Civil Aviation of China, whose officers have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure we have a successful meeting and also thank

our host for the excellent hospitality and arrangements that have been put in place.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Secretariat should you need assistance and, in that regard, I am pleased to introduce Mr John Gunther, Chief of the Economic Policy Section at ICAO Headquarters who will act as the Adviser to the Symposium and Mr Yuanzheng Wang who is an Economist in the Economic Policy Section will be acting as the Secretary to the Symposium and Dr Paul Hooper, the Air Transport Officer at the Regional Office, who will be supporting the event very closely.

As it is customary for the host administration to chair meetings of this nature with your kind permission, I have the pleasure in requesting Mr Wang Ronghua, Director General of the Department of International Affairs, General Administration of Civil Aviation of China to kindly oversee the proceedings of the Symposium. He comes with a very rich experience in the global areas of international air transport.

The programme ahead of us is a full one, but opportunities have been provided throughout to promote dialogue. I urge you to take full advantage of this and to enrich your networks during the breaks. Before I conclude, I make it a special point of paying my sincere tribute to your good self - Minister Yang Yuanyuan for not only the strong commitment you have demonstrated in the enhancement of a safer and more efficient civil aviation in the Region, but very importantly also for the fresh leadership you have bestowed in the Region. Sir, I thank you very much for this.

I look forward to meeting all of you personally over the next few days and wish you all a successful Symposium.