



**Address by the Secretary General of ICAO,
Mr. Raymond Benjamin,
to the
IATA Global Aviation Security Summit
(Geneva, 22 January 2010)**

1. Giovanni, thank you for this invitation to join Secretary Napolitano and such an impressive gathering of airline CEOs. I very much enjoyed your presentation and the perspective of the Secretary, and I look forward to a stimulating discussion after my brief remarks.
2. The attempted sabotage of Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on 25 December is a vivid reminder that security threats transcend national boundaries and can only be properly addressed through a global strategy based on effective international cooperation. As the UN agency responsible for promoting the development of civil aviation worldwide, ICAO facilitates cooperation in all areas of civil aviation, including aviation security - one of our highest priorities.
3. Within hours of the 25 December incident which prompted this meeting, I was in contact with high-level officials of the States involved and initiated a series of actions to coordinate and harmonize responses to the terrorist act. We communicated with security authorities in all of our member States to encourage them to conduct risk assessments and implement appropriate screening measures.
4. In addition, and at the request of the United States government, a meeting was held on 6 January at ICAO with officials from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), headed by the Undersecretary for the National Protection Programme Directorate. The meeting focussed particularly on four areas: collecting passenger information; sharing information between States; requirements for travel document security, and training and technical assistance.
5. ICAO provided briefings on each of these subjects, with particular emphasis on work being undertaken in the fields of Advance Passenger Information Systems, the Machine-Readable Travel Documents (MRTD) Programme, the Universal Security Audit Programme (USAP) and associated assistance activities and mechanisms involved in improving compliance with security Standards.
6. The US Delegation expressed a strong desire to work with ICAO to address these challenges on a multilateral basis, including through the various initiatives that had been presented to them during the meeting, and by providing assistance to States in coordination with ICAO and other donor States.
7. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the United States and all other States concerned for their quick and decisive action to contain the situation. The emergency measures implemented, which included increased gate screening for U.S-bound flights and passenger profiling, were necessary in light of the heightened level of risk. Although these measures have caused costly delays and inconvenience, the attempt to detonate an explosive device on board Northwest Flight 253 clearly justifies greater vigilance in the form of more stringent processes.
8. The decision to implement emergency measures is never easy because of the enormous impact on overall operations. But these actions must be taken, to protect the integrity of the system and maintain public confidence in air travel.

9. In this connection, I was invited to Washington on 14 January for a meeting, which took place within the framework of bilateral negotiations between authorities of the United States and the European Union, devoted to discussions on the consequences of the events of 25 December. At the outset, it was acknowledged that notwithstanding that the incident was aimed at an American aircraft, it represents a threat to the entire aeronautical community. Three main issues related to passenger safety were discussed:
 - First, how long these measures would stay in force. It was recognized that the emergency measures adopted could not be permanent as resources being dedicated to these new processes were being drawn from other essential safety systems.
 - Second, the issue of discrimination, whereby some States have difficulty in discriminating between measures applied to one set of passengers and not to another.
 - The third issue related to the US Transportation Security Administration deciding on the basis of incoming information, the percentage of screening applicable to different passengers. This percentage would vary and be very difficult to establish.
10. The meeting concluded with the two parties confirming that they would like to see ICAO adopt a leadership role.
11. As we speak, ICAO remains in close contact with its Member States and industry to facilitate and implement a solid response to this latest threat. But we must not forget that aviation is a global system and it requires global solutions. I emphasize that my staff and I are dedicated to ensuring that security threats are addressed in the most effective and efficient manner possible and this means that responses must be implemented with the highest degree of harmonization worldwide. We have a strong record of doing just that.
12. The challenge from ICAO's standpoint is to achieve and maintain an optimum balance between the more stringent security measures required to address emerging threats and the processes intended to facilitate air travel by 2.3 billion passengers per year. This is obviously a tall order. While ICAO's objective is to ensure air travellers reach their destinations as efficiently as possible, every one of these individuals is subject to screening. The challenge becomes more complicated when you consider that different States may implement different measures. A multilateral approach is more likely to avoid confusing passengers while boosting efforts by States and industry to strengthen the security of the air transport system. This is why collaboration is vital, and concepts such as one-stop security should be encouraged.
13. Since this latest serious incident, ICAO has been working to promote international cooperation. Terrorism is a transnational issue, and the attempted sabotage of Flight 253 is reflective of a worldwide problem; as such, it calls for a global response under ICAO's leadership, with the support of its member States.
14. To respond effectively to threats over the long term, it is essential to review existing measures and strategy from time to time, and assess how these need to change to remain effective. In this regard, ICAO is fortunate to have a multinational team of security experts at its disposal. The next meeting of the Aviation Security Panel will be held in late March, and is expected to produce concrete recommendations on how to prevent incidents such as the attempted sabotage of 25 December. In responding to this incident, it will be necessary to consider both procedural and technological solutions to this security gap, including the possible use of imaging technology – commonly referred to as body scanners – as one means of screening passengers, taking into account privacy, data protection and health issues.

15. The point is that every time a new type of incident arises, we face the prospect of introducing yet another layer of security. To do so when necessary, but without overburdening the industry, it is important to evaluate existing measures at the same time, and eliminating and revising provisions as required. In developing countermeasures to new threats, they must be practical as well as appropriate for the level of threat. Adapting to each new threat with minimum adverse impact on the air transport system remains a significant challenge.
16. I want to assure you that this and other aviation security challenges have ICAO's full attention, and are being addressed on a proactive basis. Through our panel of security experts, we are striving to identify new ways of anticipating the next threat. In this manner, an increasing risk can be managed by implementing practical countermeasures instead of requiring emergency action.
17. The air transport system remains a highly attractive target for terrorist organizations precisely because it has been so successful in promoting global economic growth and has become an essential mode of transport. The volume of operations, and our reliance on an efficient air transport system, means we can expect aviation to remain a target. By remaining proactive, our intention is to ensure that civil aviation's vulnerabilities are not exploited by terrorists.
18. My message today is quite simple. ICAO is keenly aware of the challenges you face as operators and recognizes that whatever security measures are put into place, now and in the future, must not unduly disrupt operations or increase the cost of doing business. Our objective has always been to strike the right balance between protecting the safety of passengers while assuring they transit through airports as quickly and as efficiently as possible. We recognize that the health of the air transport industry, and its ability to support economic and social development around the world, are at stake.
