



**Address by the Secretary General of ICAO  
Mr. Raymond Benjamin  
to the  
International Civil Aviation Day 2011  
(Montréal, 7 December 2011)**

*Good morning,*

Today I am proud to say we celebrate International Civil Aviation Day.

This day marks the creation of ICAO on December 7, 1944. On this day, the Convention on International Civil Aviation was signed. It was – and is – an important day in our history.

It was that convention in 1944 which defined the purpose of ICAO: to ensure that “...international civil aviation...be developed in a *safe* and orderly manner...”

As you can see, ladies and gentlemen, safety has been at the core of the Organization’s “raison d’être” since the beginning.

So today it is important for all of us to take time from our busy schedules to acknowledge and appreciate the history of our organization.

Of course, ICAO has undergone many changes over the years. We are always evolving and adapting to meet the needs of the international aviation community. On this day of celebration, it is important to see the many successes we have achieved in helping to make international aviation a powerful contributor to economic and social development around the world.

But, just as we celebrate the past, we must also look to the future. ICAO has an important role to play in building that future as we work together to ensure the safe and orderly development of international air travel for generations to come.

With that in mind, I am pleased to formally announce an important milestone today: the inaugural edition of the ICAO 2011 State of Global Aviation Safety report.

For the first time in the history of the Organization, ICAO has published a report available to key stakeholders as well as the travelling public. It is a report which provides a strategic safety message. that an increasingly proactive and collaborative approach to aviation safety is essential to achieving future success.

The report is much more than a compilation of individual projects. It is a way of bringing everything we do in support of safe air travel together into one compelling “safety story.”

Using the ICAO safety framework as a backdrop, the report provides an account of achievements in the areas of: Policy and Standardization, safety monitoring, safety analysis and implementation of many assistance programmes in partnership with the international aviation community. In fact, ICAO is already working with IATA, ACI, and CANSO to develop an integrated approach to assess safety across all operational sectors of the aviation system.

In the area of safety policy and standardization, ICAO is working to revise the Global Aviation Safety Plan. ICAO is also working in close collaboration with States and international organizations to establish a 19th Annex to the Chicago Convention on State safety functions.

Together, these policy initiatives will serve to give added prominence to safety management principles and advance a more proactive approach to safety worldwide.

ICAO's safety monitoring activities are focused on the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme. Through this programme, ICAO is able to assess implementation of international requirements that provide the foundation for a sound safety oversight system.

After having completed audits of 93% of all ICAO Member States, it is clear that the degree of implementation varies among regions and there is an unacceptable variance of safety performance within most regions. Through the integration of this data with other sources of information, ICAO is developing plans of action to improve safety performance where needed most to reduce the risk and the loss of life.

We know that our initiatives and activities are making a difference because of the testimonials which recognize the assistance efforts undertaken by ICAO and our partner organizations. These success stories represent the cooperative spirit demonstrated by ICAO Member States and numerous organizations through the provision of financial and technical assistance projects.

These assistance projects are highlighted in the report and they are essential elements of our safety strategy.

In addition, ICAO has created the Aviation Safety Fund. This fund allows for the collection and use of voluntary contributions to finance targeted assistance efforts. It also covers costs associated with ICAO's contingency response to unforeseen events.

The Safety Collaborative Assistance Network is another innovative approach to help with the exchange of safety information regarding financial and technical assistance activities.

The report also highlights regional cooperation initiatives. Those include the development of Regional Aviation Safety Groups, Regional Safety Oversight Organizations, Regional Accident and Incident Investigation Organizations, and others.

Other ICAO safety initiatives include actions taken to mitigate the risks associated with volcanic ash. The International Volcanic Ash Task Force comprises members from 16 States and 14 international organizations. This Task Force has already taken urgent measures to ensure safe operations in airspace contaminated by volcanic ash and is working to develop processes to better detect and avoid unacceptable concentrations in the future.

In addition, I am pleased to say the ICAO runway safety programme and other airport safety enhancement programmes are having a positive impact as well.

The continued introduction of performance based navigation systems is also resulting in significant safety benefits, by providing vertical guidance during the approach and landing flight phases to reduce the risk of runway excursions.

There is also a project to improve aviation language proficiency. There are standards that ensure the safe carriage of dangerous goods as well as the implementation of fatigue risk management systems.

Each page of this report reminds us of the many contributions you make every day to continually improve aviation safety. It communicates our safety story – for ICAO and for all of you who make this significant work possible.

I know I have mentioned a list of many initiatives. But initiatives are only part of the story. There is also a bottom line. For us the bottom line is the last component of the safety framework: Safety Analysis.

One of the things we celebrate today is the fact that our collective efforts have made international aviation the safest mode of transportation. The global accident rate is remarkably low, with only 4 accidents per million departures in 2010.

Despite these impressive numbers, our passion for safety leads us to constantly search for new and innovative approaches. It is this passion that drives us to reduce the number of accidents and related fatalities -- despite the anticipated future growth in air travel.

Achieving future safety improvements will depend on our ability to attract and retain the necessary talent and expertise. That's why ICAO, its Member States and key partner organizations have joined together to ensure we have the qualified people we need to manage the future air transportation system.

The 2010 Next Generation of Aviation Professionals Symposium was the kick-off event for this objective. A series of regional events will follow in the coming year to ensure the viability of ICAO's safety strategy in the future.

As I look out into the audience today, I realize that the next generation of safety professionals are well represented here today. I am pleased to see many newcomers to ICAO, who bring new perspectives and energy to this Organization. They are in the Company of accomplished and dedicated ICAO colleagues many of whom are celebrating anniversaries today. To me this is truly a winning team.

So with that in mind, let us, on this International Civil Aviation Day, celebrate the past and look with optimism to the future. Before commencing the service award ceremony, I ask those of you who joined ICAO less than 5 years ago to please stand and be acknowledged.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank our newest generation of colleagues and all colleagues celebrating anniversaries today. I salute your contributions to the achievements of ICAO. I am truly proud to be here today to recognize our past achievements and look forward to the future as we work together to make aviation safer, more secure and sustainable.

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