



ICAO

**Address by the  
Secretary General of the  
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),  
Mr. Raymond Benjamin,  
to the Third Meeting of the Directors General of Civil Aviation  
Middle East Region**

*(Doha, Qatar, 27-29 April 2015)*

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1. Good morning ladies and gentlemen.
  2. It is a great honour, and indeed a privilege, for me to deliver this opening address to the Third Meeting of the Directors General of Civil Aviation of the Middle East Region. My thanks to Mr. Abdul Aziz Al-Noaimi, Chairman of the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority, for his kind introduction.
  3. It was only four years ago that I had the honour of opening the very first of these meetings in Abu Dhabi, and it has been very encouraging to see the progress which your Region has made since that time.
  4. But before I begin to review in greater detail your local accomplishments and challenges, permit me please to provide some perspective on the latest global indicators for the air transport sector, along with some points for your Region specifically.
  5. ICAO's figures show that some 3.2 billion passengers took advantage of air transport services for their business and travel needs in 2014. This total passenger figure is up approximately five per cent compared to 2013, and is expected to reach over 6.4 billion by 2030.
  6. Aircraft departures reached 33 million globally during 2014, establishing a new record and surpassing the 2013 figure by roughly one million flights. Solid global economic growth, as well as some gains in world trade, helped scheduled passenger traffic to grow at a rate of 5.9 per cent last year, compared to 5.5 per cent in 2013.
  7. The world's largest air travel market in 2014, with a 31 per cent share of world Revenue Passenger Kilometres (RPKs), was the Asia-Pacific. The second and third largest air travel markets were Europe and North America, with 27 per cent and 25 per cent shares respectively.
  8. Your Middle East Region accounted for 9 per cent of world RPKs, but what is perhaps more noteworthy is that it recorded the fastest travel market growth rate at 12.8 per cent for 2014.
  9. And with its combined economic strength and airline network expansion, the MID Region also recorded the highest international passenger traffic growth rate at 13.4 per cent. This figure, along with the equally impressive 11.3 per cent growth you registered in freight traffic, were each *more than double* the comparable rates seen anywhere else in the world.
  10. Looking now to global and local developments with respect to ICAO's strategic objectives, let me please begin with our most fundamental goal, Safety, and summarize for you the results of our recent High Level Safety Conference.
  11. The disappearance of Malaysian Airlines flight MH370 in 2014, and the downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17, raised important concerns with respect to the public's trust in air transport. This is why ICAO rapidly convened a sectoral response and brought related proposals to the attention of the HLSC less than a year after these incidents took place.

12. With respect to MH17 and conflict zones, the Conference's main recommendation was for ICAO to develop and host a centralized online repository where States, operators and applicable organizations could share up-to-date conflict zone risk information.
13. The ICAO Council subsequently endorsed this recommendation and, as of early April, access to the repository for registered users has been readily available on the homepage of the ICAO website.
14. Another major outcome of the High Level Safety Conference was support for a new 15-minute flight-tracking standard. This development represents a critical first step in the implementation of ICAO's more comprehensive Global Aeronautical Distress and Safety System, or GADSS, which over time will also lead to greater tracking frequency and precision under distress conditions.
15. ICAO is also leading a global aircraft tracking implementation initiative at present, in order to demonstrate the best use of existing equipment and capabilities. A dozen or more world airlines are participating, as well as a range of aircraft types.
16. Another topic I wish to briefly address today relates to the very unfortunate and more recent loss of Germanwings Flight 9525.
17. ICAO has been seeking to draw greater attention to the importance of mental health assessments for licensed aviation personnel since 2009, and we will continue to do so. But I also wish to stress in this regard that determining mental health to any practical extent is a very complex medical challenge, and that airlines, pilots and others can only react to what the best medical approaches make available to us.
18. Looking at your region's Safety issues more closely, ICAO has been encouraged to see that the MID Regional Safety Indicators and Targets have been identified and included in your Regional Safety Strategy. We are similarly heartened that your *Third Annual Safety Report*, which monitors results, was recently approved by the MID Regional Aviation Safety Group.
19. We have also gratefully observed that several of your Safety Enhancement Initiatives (SEIs) and Detailed Implementation Plans (DIPs) have now been completed, and we will look forward to this meeting's decision on the possible establishment of Regional Safety Oversight Organizations RSOO(s) for the Arab Civil Aviation commission (ACAC) and MID States.
20. With respect to ICAO's Strategic Objectives for Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency, the revised ICAO *Global Air Navigation Plan* (GANP) continues to serve as the guiding resource for all long-term capacity planning in our sector.
21. And the annual ICAO *Air Navigation Report* and real-time Performance Dashboards continue to drive greater progress and accountability on local goals.
22. We have been pleased to note in this regard that the MID Regional Air Navigation Indicators and Targets have now been identified and included in your Regional Air Navigation Strategy. As you know, this strategy is based on 12 priority performance improvements reflected in the GANP's Block Zero ASBU Modules.
23. ICAO is also expecting your States to sign the Memorandum of Agreement on the MID Region ATM Enhancement Programme during this meeting, an ongoing project being managed under ICAO's Technical Cooperation Bureau.

24. Lastly, the establishment of the MID Region Aeronautical Information Management (AIM) Database is another regional initiative which is now at an advanced stage, and your support will be appreciated to expedite its implementation.
25. I noted earlier that air traffic volumes globally will double by 2030, but related projections point to a doubling of Middle East Regional traffic much sooner than this – perhaps as early as 2020. This makes all of these issues urgent concerns for your Region's States, especially as regards the needed harmonization and coordination of local air traffic management responsibilities.
26. Moving now to ICAO's Security and Facilitation objectives, let us first recall that the task of safeguarding civil aviation is a formidable undertaking. Today's threats are real, and they are almost constantly evolving. Be it cyber-attacks or 3D-printed weapons, aviation's focus and determination to address emerging trends will continue to be tested.
27. Furthermore, recent events, such as the 2014 attack at the Karachi International Airport in Pakistan, remind us that civil aviation remains a target for terrorists. This is an unfortunate reality and one which is unlikely to change.
28. ICAO is also continuing to support States through our cooperative work with the World Customs Organization on cargo screening and clearance optimization, as well as through our new Traveler Identification Programme. It establishes an integrated approach to the identification management process leading up to the issuance of travel documents and their inspection at borders.
29. ICAO has been happy to take note of the progress being achieved since the MID Cooperative Aviation Security Programme was established in 2012.
30. CASP-MID is successfully providing a regional approach to aviation security assistance and training, work which is being aided by the new Aviation Security Training Centres ICAO has established here.
31. The first of these was established in the UAE in 2008, but more recently additional facilities have been realized in Lebanon in 2013, and the Kingdom of Bahrain last April. We have already realized new USAP-CMA auditor training in Bahrain, developments which have been helpfully complemented by the regional seminars you arranged in Cairo covering facilitation and audit activities.
32. In the area of Economic Development, ICAO continues to strongly support agreements and measures aimed at accelerating the process of liberalization and optimized connectivity. Signing and ratification of the Damascus Convention by all MID States is certainly encouraged in this regard.
33. ICAO also recognizes, however, that some emerging issues which can negatively impact liberalization, mainly relating to protectionism and slot access, are concerns not only locally in your region, but also where you fly to.
34. Lastly in this area, I would highlight that ICAO will be conducting our ICAN Air Services Negotiation meeting this October in Antalya, Turkey, and I would encourage all MID States to take advantage of this unique facility.
35. In the Environmental domain, ICAO continues to drive forward on the basket of measures relating to biofuels development, improved operations and other initiatives which have been supported by recent ICAO Assemblies. We have realized a number of important achievements in setting Standards on aircraft noise and emissions, and we are currently finalizing a first ever CO<sub>2</sub> certification Standard for aircraft.

36. We are also progressing our work on an aviation Market-based Measure, and conducting a series of MBM Global Aviation Dialogues (GLADs) this month to raise awareness of it in every ICAO Region. The MID GLADs event took place just last week in Cairo, and was greatly appreciated by all present.
37. Ladies and gentlemen, in closing today, let me please stress that progress on all of the priorities I have outlined here will require not only that we determine practical standards and guidance, but also that our Member States have the tools and proficiencies they need to effectively put those provisions into practice.
38. The Council President has made it his clear priority that ICAO stay closely focused on providing and coordinating the implementation assistance and capacity-building resources many of our States require, and ICAO recognizes that, only by succeeding on this goal, will we be able to ensure that *No Country is Left Behind* where the significant social and economic benefits of air transport are concerned.
39. I must also bring to your attention that this will quite likely be my last opportunity to address MID DGCAAs while serving as the Secretary General of ICAO.
40. It has been my great honour to serve ICAO, and the global air transport sector it supports, for so many years now, and during my tenure the Middle East region has made tremendous progress in many areas.
41. I wish all of my dear friends and colleagues here in the Middle East only the greatest successes in your private and professional lives in the years ahead, and I trust that further productive progress will be made during the course of this Third Meeting of MID DGCAAs.

Thank you.