



'No Room for Complacency'

BY DR. ASSAD KOTAITE

Transparency and sharing of safety information are fundamental tenets of a safe air transport system. They also were the underlying theme of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) conference of directors general of civil aviation (DGCAs), held March 20–22, 2006, in Montreal, Canada, to formulate a global strategy for aviation safety in the 21st century.

DGCAs from 153 contracting states responded positively to the call for greater openness by agreeing to post results from the organization's Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) on the ICAO public Web site.

I took the initiative of proposing to the ICAO Council the convening of the conference because a series of six major fatal accidents in August and September of 2005 was a dramatic reminder that systemic deficiencies identified under USOAP since 1999 were still present. As I told the meeting, there is absolutely no room for complacency where safety is concerned, there never was, and there never will be.

USOAP consists of regular, mandatory, systematic and harmonized safety audits carried out by ICAO in its 189 contracting states to assess the level of implementation of ICAO standards and recommended practices (SARPs), identify safety concerns or deficiencies, and provide recommendations for their resolution.

Summary safety reports from USOAP to appear on the ICAO Web site will cover eight critical areas: aviation legislation, operating regulations, structure of the civil aviation administration and safety oversight function, technical guidance material, technical personnel, licensing and certification obligations, continuing surveillance obligations, and resolution of safety issues. States will be able to add complementary data to help evaluate the level of safety in their country. They

can publish more extensive, or even full, audit reports if they wish.

Although the deadline for posting the results was set for March 23, 2008, as chairman of the conference, I urged the DGCAs to comply as soon as possible within the two-year time frame. By the end of the meeting, some 70 states had already authorized ICAO to publish the information on its Web site; others have since forwarded their approval.

A progress report will be submitted to the next regular session of the ICAO Assembly in the fall of 2007, and a full announcement on transparency achieved will be issued on March 23, 2008, listing those states that have failed to meet the deadline.

This historic decision and measures taken at the conference, which attracted 566 participants, including delegates from 26 international organizations, will foster mutual trust between states, increase public confidence in air travel and help maintain the integrity of the safest and most efficient means of mass transportation ever created.

In addition to concluding that the public should be able to access, without delay, the information necessary to make an informed decision about the safety of air transportation, the conference made a number of key recommendations on sharing of information, among them that:

- The Council of ICAO should ensure that contracting states have access to reliable and timely information on registration, ownership and control of aircraft habitually used in international navigation;
- The Council should study the possibility of establishing an expanded database application that would allow contracting states to voluntarily share airworthiness information related to aircraft habitually involved in international operations; and,

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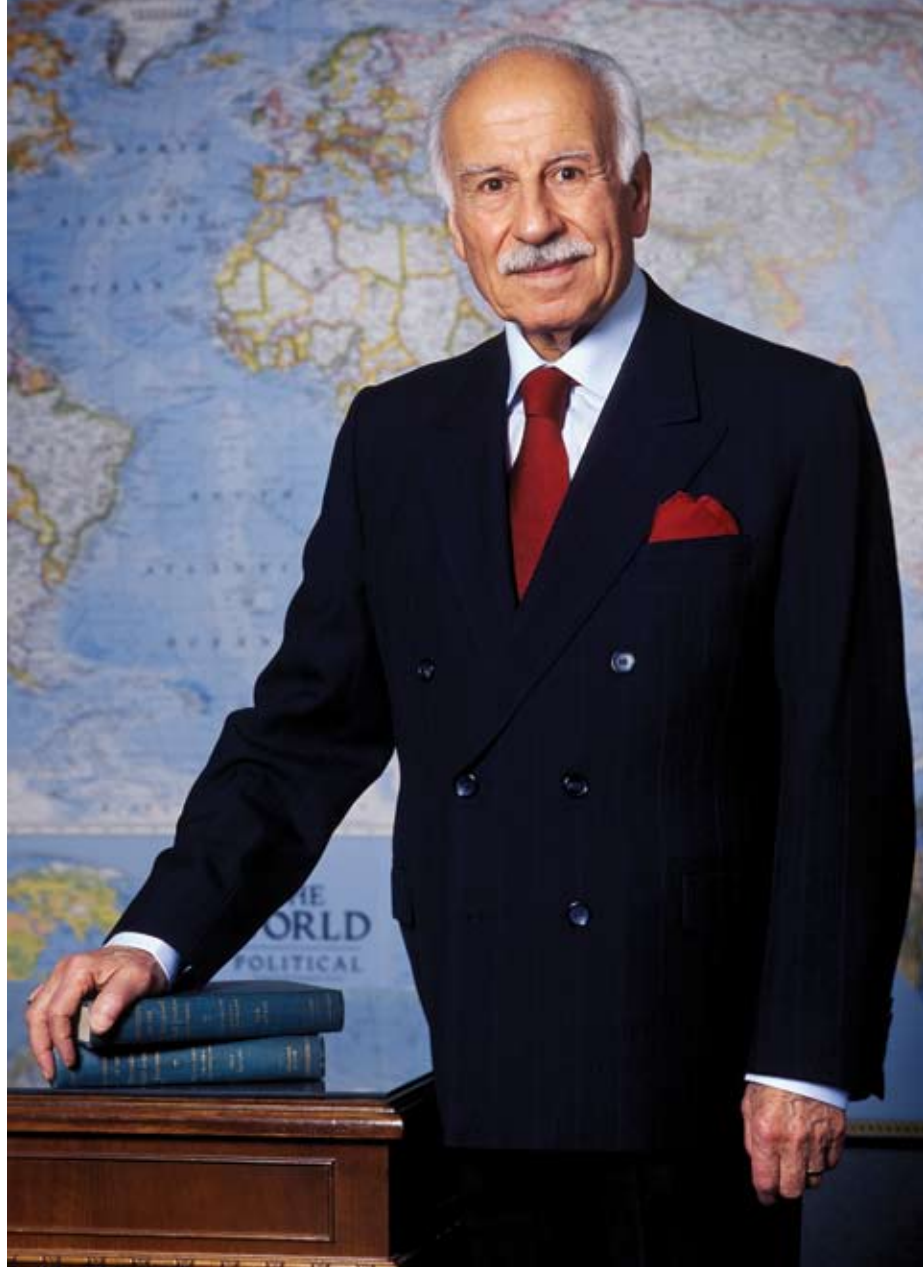
- States of design and registry of aircraft should conclude an airworthiness agreement as stipulated in the ICAO *Airworthiness Manual* (Doc 9760) as a means of promoting the exchange of continuing airworthiness information between the states.

In the spirit of transparency, ICAO and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) signed, prior to the conference, a memorandum of cooperation on sharing safety-related information from our respective safety audit programs, in order to better identify potential safety risks and prevent aircraft accidents. The IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) program is the first global standard for airline safety management, and the IOSA Registry is publicly accessible on the IATA Web site at <www.iata.org>. While sharing of information can strengthen the overall system, we must also strengthen the components of the system — that is, the safety oversight capabilities of individual civil aviation administrations. This is particularly significant for contracting states that lack the necessary human, technical or financial resources. Much of the answer lies in the implementation of sustainable regional safety oversight organizations. These organizations can be established only by coordinated efforts from ICAO, states, industry and donors.

It is essential that national civil aviation authorities, industry and funding institutions cooperate fully in the provision of technical assistance and guidance around the world. ICAO stands ready to help coordinate multilateral assistance when that is the preferred approach so that states may build the required safety oversight capacity and implement safe practices.

While safety-oversight auditing is effective in identifying and promoting corrective action, it should not be seen as an end in itself. Equally important is the ability to bring about improvements. Resources allocated to audits and to remedies must be evaluated carefully, so that no disproportionate amount is allotted to auditing at the expense of safety enhancements.

Experience in the industry itself has demonstrated that the implementation of safety



management systems (SMSs) is the most effective way of addressing the need for increased supervision with a relatively small workforce. Many of our member states are now implementing or looking into SMS. At ICAO, we have just adopted standards for establishing SMSs.

Another promising avenue is the commitment to implementing a safety culture throughout the air transport infrastructure and at all levels — states, operators, manufacturers, service providers and associations.

Together, the actions and proposals adopted by the conference and highlighted in the final declaration are vital elements of a global strategy that I am confident will ensure the continued safety of civil aviation in the 21st century. ●

Dr. Assad Kotaite is retiring in July 2006 after nearly 30 years as president of the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization. He will be succeeded by Roberto Kobeh González, who has been Mexico's representative to the Council since 1998. He will serve as Council president until after the next election in fall 2007.

Text of ICAO Declaration on Sharing Information

The following is the text of the declaration approved by the directors general of civil aviation during their meeting March 20–22, 2006, in Montreal, Canada:

Whereas the Convention on International Civil Aviation and its Annexes provide the essential framework required to meet the safety needs of a global aviation system;

Whereas the Directors General of Civil Aviation have a collective responsibility for international civil aviation safety;

Recognizing that the safety framework must be fully utilized by all stakeholders and continuously evolve to ensure its sustained effectiveness and efficiency in the changing regulatory, economic and technical environment of the 21st century;

Recalling that transparency and sharing of safety information are fundamental tenets of a safe air transportation system;

Recalling that recognition as valid of certificates and licences of other States is governed by Article 33 of the Convention and applicable Standards;

Recalling the role of ICAO in the settlement of disputes;

Recognizing that mutual trust between States as well as public confidence in the safety of air transportation is contingent upon access to adequate safety information;

Recognizing that safety is a shared responsibility, and advancements in global safety can only be possible through the leadership of ICAO, and a cooperative, collaborative and coordinated effort among all stakeholders; and

Recognizing that further improvements in aviation safety within and among

States require a cooperative and proactive approach in which safety risks are identified and managed;

The Directors General of Civil Aviation:

1. *Commit* to reinforce the global aviation safety framework by:
 - a) sharing as soon as possible appropriate safety-related information among States, all other aviation stakeholders and the public, including the disclosure of information on the results of their safety oversight audit as soon as possible and, in any case, not later than 23 March 2008;
 - b) exercising safety oversight of their operators in full compliance with applicable SARPs, assuring themselves that foreign operators flying in their territory receive adequate oversight from their own State and taking appropriate action when necessary to preserve safety;
 - c) expeditiously implementing safety management systems across the aviation industry to complement the existing regulatory framework;
 - d) developing sustainable safety solutions, including the formation or strengthening of regional and sub-regional safety oversight organizations and initiatives; and
 - e) promoting a just culture;

The Conference:

2. *Calls upon* States to base the recognition as valid of certificates and licences of other States exclusively on safety considerations and not for the purpose of gaining economic advantage;
3. *Calls upon* States, ICAO, industry, and donor organizations to direct

resources towards the establishment of sustainable safety oversight solutions;

4. *Calls upon* States, ICAO and industry to support the coordinated implementation of safety management systems;
5. *Calls upon* ICAO to:
 - a) develop and actively support information exchange mechanisms that allow for an unrestricted flow of safety information between all aviation stakeholders;
 - b) develop by June 2006 a strategy to communicate safety information effectively to the public;
 - c) develop a mechanism under Article 21 of the Convention to make available aircraft registration and operator information;
 - d) develop guidelines and procedures to verify the conditions for recognition as valid of certificates and licences, in keeping with Article 33 of the Convention; and
 - e) study the development of a new Annex on safety oversight, safety assessment and safety management;
6. *Calls upon* States to demonstrate the political will to address aviation safety shortcomings, this includes the establishment, where necessary, of an autonomous Civil Aviation Authority which is empowered and adequately funded to provide effective safety oversight; and
7. *Calls upon* States and industry to closely coordinate with ICAO their safety initiatives to ensure optimum benefits to global aviation safety and to reduce duplication in effort.