

STARTING Down the Road

Over the past few months, I have made a big deal about establishing connections across the various components of our industry, breaking down old barriers to attain the next level of safety improvements. We have also made considerable mention of the *Global Aviation Safety Roadmap* in this column and elsewhere in this magazine. Well, as with most things, there comes a time when you have to stop talking and start doing. This month, I'd like to talk about the first few steps taken with the *Roadmap*.

As a reminder, the *Roadmap* is a strategic action plan that a diverse group of aviation industry representatives put together to help the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) work with the industry to produce coordinated and integrated plans for improving safety around the world, region by region.

The Foundation joined with our friends from the Dutch Directorate General for Civil Aviation and Freight Transport (DGTL) and the secretariat of ICAO to host the first meeting on the first region where the *Roadmap* will actually be put to work — Africa. We called it a “think tank” to break the mold of preconceptions and invited a cross section of people representing African operators and regulators, manufacturers and various organizations that run support programs and safety initiatives on the continent.

We had only a couple of days, so the best we could hope for was to scratch the surface and agree on a way forward. One thing was clear: The regional planning process laid out in the *Roadmap* is a good one. Thanks to the process, and the quality of the participants at the table, we were able to get to the critical underlying issues. Everybody agreed that the priority had to be placed on programs that target deep-seated issues before other reforms could take hold. It was also very clear that

changes to the African airline industry had to be driven by strong and capable regulators, and that those regulators had to be able to do their job without interference from politicians. That is a pretty touchy discussion topic for a bunch of people sitting in Washington, but the good news is that it was the same tough conclusion the African Union itself reached last year.

It is important that a disparate group of people used the *Roadmap* as a tool to get to conclusions together. And what is different in this instance is that the conclusions were not the destination, but the starting point.

After the big focus areas were identified, what remained was to figure out who takes the next step and starts building those vital plans. That is a tough question. It will take more focus and more resources than have been invested before. Over the next couple of months, the think-tank participants will develop proposals that should gain the support of the African Union and the African aviation industry.

Other regions are ready to start down the *Roadmap* path as well. Plans are coming together in the Middle East and South America. It is pretty clear that everyone will approach it a little differently, and different organizations will be taking the lead in different regions. As long as everybody agrees to the destination, it doesn't matter who drives or the route they take. They will all get there. That is the good thing about a roadmap.



A large, white, handwritten signature of William R. Voss, written in a cursive style.

William R. Voss
President and CEO
Flight Safety Foundation