



**Address by the President of the Council of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González
to the Ministerial Conference on
Global Environment and Energy in Transport**

(Tokyo, Japan, 15 January 2009)

I wish to thank the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan for inviting me to speak before such a prestigious and influential gathering on behalf of the world aviation community. I also wish to commend your country for convening a Ministerial Conference at this time and for its longstanding commitment to environmental protection.

Japan has played a prominent leadership role in many important environmental meetings, including the third Conference of the Parties (COP/3) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which produced the Kyoto Protocol to the Convention. Last year, Japan hosted the G8+5 Summit, which resulted in the Declaration of Leaders Meeting of Major Economies on Energy Security and Climate Change. In the G8 Leaders Declaration on Climate Change, Parties emphasized the importance of expeditious discussions in ICAO for addressing emissions from international aviation.

During the UNFCCC Climate Change talks held last year, Japan's participation was again significant, when it raised a number of important issues related to a future climate regime, as for example how to consider sectoral approaches. During these talks, a number of delegates stressed the urgency of developing concrete proposals for the COP/15 meeting of December 2009, in Copenhagen, where the objective will be to produce this new climate agreement.

The aviation community shares this sense of urgency and is appreciative of the opportunity to present its vision for addressing greenhouse gas emissions from international civil aviation.

First and foremost, it must be recalled that, so far in the UNFCCC discussions leading up to the Copenhagen meeting, no consensus has appeared on how to consider international emissions, also referred to as "Bunkers". The Kyoto Protocol stipulates that emissions from international aviation are to be dealt with through ICAO while emissions from domestic aviation are included in targets for Annex I Parties.

There is much merit to this approach.

First of all, emissions from international aviation are, by definition, global in nature; they are not contained within national boundaries. Assigning international emissions is an extremely complex task at best and even more difficult to implement or enforce.

Second, achieving consistent improvements in the energy efficiency of air transport requires globally harmonized environmental aviation Standards, procedures and practices that need to be cooperatively established and universally accepted and implemented.

And third, optimum compatibility between environmental sustainability and the safety and efficiency of the global air transport system must never be compromised. An environmentally friendly aviation industry that is not safe or efficient is not viable.

Putting things in perspective, we must also remember that international aviation represents a relatively small source of emissions contributing to climate change. According to the International Panel on Climate Change, domestic and international operations combined account for an estimated 2 per cent of human produced CO₂, the major greenhouse gas. International aviation alone is responsible for slightly more than half of these emissions. The problem is that the growth in traffic is outstripping the substantive progress of the industry in reducing emissions.

Moreover, the aviation industry has a remarkable track record of continuously improving the efficiency of its operations in minimizing the impact of air travel on the environment and specifically climate change. For decades, airlines have systematically employed new technology as soon as it became available and they continue to do so. The typical aircraft today is about 70 per cent more fuel efficient than their counterparts of 40 years ago. New aircraft entering production are even more fuel efficient. Overall, all stakeholders are searching and finding ways to making aviation operations as environmentally friendly as possible.

For its part, ICAO has been active in addressing the full range of environmental issues for more than 40 years and today brings to the table considerable experience and expertise in dealing with the climate change challenge. Coordinating our efforts has been the ICAO Council's Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP). CAEP has, among other accomplishments, recommended for approval by Council Standards related to nitrogen oxides, compiled operating procedures to improve fuel efficiency, developed guidance for States wishing to include international aviation in emissions trading programmes and developed a 'Carbon Calculator' to estimate CO₂ emissions from aircraft.

Through these and countless other activities, ICAO has, and continues to, fulfil its mandate as the official, international forum for developing globally harmonized environmental aviation Standards, policies and practices, all of which have contributed significantly to improving the energy efficiency of air transport worldwide. ICAO is also in the unique position to ensure optimum compatibility between environmental sustainability and the safety, security and efficiency of the global air transport system, without which the continued integrity of air operations could be compromised.

The 36th Session of the ICAO Assembly in September 2007 recognized the essential role played by ICAO in this area and called on the Organization to exercise even more leadership. One Assembly Resolution called for the creation of the Group on International Aviation and Climate Change (GIACC). The Group consists of 15 high-level government officials from developed and developing States and whose task is to develop and recommend to ICAO an aggressive programme of action for international aviation and climate change. The intention is to consider the recommendations in a high level meeting in ICAO in connection with the 15th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Copenhagen.

At the second meeting of the GIACC last Summer, a number of issues were discussed, including the possible establishment of short, medium and long term goals for fuel burn. Three smaller working groups were formed to expedite work on goals, measures and means to evaluate progress to reduce aviation greenhouse gas emissions, respectively. We were pleased to welcome at that second meeting a representative of the UNFCCC. His participation underscored the fact that both our organizations, the UNFCCC and ICAO, are generally moving in the same direction, debating similar

issues and likewise setting their sights on similar outcomes. As we advance along these parallel streams of activity, it is vital that we continue building on the excellent cooperation we have developed and nurtured over the years, most notably in quantifying the volume of CO₂ emissions attributable to international aviation. Together, we can better identify what measures need to be implemented so that aviation emissions continue to be properly addressed.

Also since the Assembly, ICAO has been very active in developing measures and programmes to enhance its contribution to the climate change challenge. It has made substantial progress in responding to the request of the Organization's governing body, the Council, to prioritize and intensify all activities related to greenhouse gas emissions. This includes greenhouse gas emission quantification, fuel burn goals and metrics, operational measures to reduce global emissions and market-based measures.

Last year, ICAO launched its Carbon Calculator. The user-friendly Calculator is freely accessible on the Organization's website. It makes it possible to consistently estimate the emissions attributed to a specific flight and to use the results in a carbon offset programme. The Calculator is universal, neutral and transparent, and applies the best publicly available industry data. The reaction so far from Member States, industry and users is very positive and we intend to apply suggestions received to continually improve the Calculator. Recently, as part of the UN climate neutral initiative, the ICAO Carbon Calculator was approved as the reference tool for all UN bodies taking action to offset emissions from their air travel. ICAO continues to cooperate with its sister organizations by producing an interface that will facilitate the use of the Calculator on an organizational level.

Another promising avenue that is being explored is the use of alternative fuels to enhance the environmental sustainability of aviation. ICAO knows how important it is to generate momentum around such innovative avenues and will host a workshop on alternative fuels for aviation from 10 to 12 February 2009. The workshop is designed to promote exploration of key issues related to alternative fuels, including ongoing and planned research and development, certification of fuels, production and associated infrastructure implications for distribution. The results of the workshop will form the basis of a world conference on the subject planned for the end of this year, with the objective to produce a roadmap for the implementation of alternative fuels for aviation.

Turning to the policy side of the discussion for a moment, I would like to underscore our first "Aviation and Carbon Markets Workshop" held in June of 2008. Our objective was to bring together concerned stakeholders and sensitize them to the full range of issues related to aviation emissions and carbon markets. We addressed a variety of approaches, including emissions trading and carbon offset programmes. We also initiated discussion on other Kyoto flexible mechanisms, opportunities for a global aviation market and on emerging discussions relating to possible funding options for mitigation and adaptation.

Regarding the issue of funding adaptation/mitigation measures in relation to climate change through levies imposed on international aviation, ICAO is concerned over the proliferation of charges and taxes on air traffic, with aviation being too often used as an easy target to raise revenue in various fields. It is important to remember that whenever levies are applied to address the protection of the environment, the principles of non-discrimination, transparency and cost-relatedness enshrined in the UNFCCC and the ICAO policies on charges and taxes should be taken into consideration, as well as the impact on all parties concerned, in particular the developing countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you can see, the aviation community, under the leadership of ICAO, is totally committed to continue its progress employing the full range of technological, operational and market-based options. These include newer more efficient aircraft, improved air traffic management, better maintenance practices, more efficient airports, alternative fuels and possibly other emerging and innovative solutions such as emissions trading and carbon offsets. As important, they must be developed on a global scale and in a manner that does not discriminate and that takes into account the specific

realities of States and regions. This is particularly important given that air transport is a driver of economic activity and, as such, a key contributor to achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, particularly in less developed and island countries which rely on air transport to reach international markets for their goods and for attracting business and tourist travel.

ICAO is well placed to ensure the development, promotion and implementation of such an approach. But I feel compelled to remind this audience that ICAO, like all United Nations agencies, is simply an agent of its Contracting States. We can only move as far and as fast as the collective political will of its Contracting States. Therefore, the value and importance of this Ministerial Conference is that it can embolden the political will of States to move forward with concrete plans. The world aviation community is entirely committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from its operations and ICAO stands ready to continue providing the leadership that is essential to transform this commitment into a global reality. Our challenge is great, yet our will to succeed is greater, for it reflects the collective will of all parties.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a productive conference.