



OPENING REMARKS
SECRETARY GENERAL OF ICAO, MR. RAYMOND BENJAMIN,
TO THE JOINT CONFERENCE ON
ENHANCING AIR CARGO SECURITY AND FACILITATION
(Singapore, 5 July 2012)

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Transport of Singapore, Secretary General of the World Customs Organization, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you today to this very timely conference.

On behalf of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), I wish to say that we are delighted to take part in this forum together with our partners, the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the Government of Singapore, and I would like to extend a special thank you to the Ministry of Transport of Singapore and to Singapore Customs, our hosts, for providing such an impressive venue, and making all the necessary arrangements.

Having a select representation of Customs authorities, aviation security regulators and industry together in one place presents a unique opportunity to discuss our common challenges and, more importantly, learn from each other. Above all, your participation highlights the importance of working together to address these challenges.

Recent incidents and successes in countering threats to the security of civil aviation have demonstrated the importance of collaboration between security authorities at the State level and across international borders. They highlight the constant need to join forces to counter the threat of terrorism.

This was the message at the heart of the Declaration on Aviation Security which was adopted by the ICAO Assembly in October 2010 and, given the nature of the threat to the air cargo system, this is also the message I want to emphasize today.

Allow me to briefly review why there is such intense focus on air cargo security.

Authorities, you recall, uncovered a plot in October 2010 to sabotage two air cargo aircraft using improvised explosive devices hidden in computer printer cartridges. While the plot failed, it was an unmistakable sign that terrorists will attempt to exploit perceived vulnerabilities in the aviation security system, and will do so by employing artful tactics to defeat security systems.

Although disaster was averted by quick action based on the sharing of intelligence, the incident highlighted the need to reinforce air cargo security measures.

Subsequently, Mr. Kunio Mikuriya, the Secretary General of the WCO, and I, as the Secretary General of ICAO, signed a memorandum of understanding which formalized our cooperation on air cargo security matters.

Such collaboration is important because supply chain issues relate to both security and Customs procedures. The requirements of aviation security and Customs need to be considered at the same time.

When we coordinate our efforts in this way, we find synergies that can help us to streamline security processes and protect the flow of goods on which the world's economy has come to depend.

Let me be clear: there is no doubt that security of the global supply chain is a formidable challenge. Last year alone, the world's airlines transported more than 49 million tonnes of cargo. More than half of this was carried on aircraft with passengers.

But, if we apply suitable controls, end-to-end security can be achieved, from the beginning to the end of the shipping process.

A multifaceted network for transporting vast amounts of freight and mail presents certain vulnerabilities. ICAO and its Member States, the WCO, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Universal Postal Union (UPU), and our various industry partners all have a role to play in securing the global supply chain.

ICAO has taken steps recently to contribute to this effort. Cargo-related Standards and Recommended Practices have been further strengthened, and include a requirement for ICAO Member States to establish a supply chain security process.

While this is an important step forward in mitigating security risk, our work is far from done and we need to continue implementing changes. For example, we need to agree on appropriate security measures for air cargo to be transported on all-cargo aircraft. Issues related to identifying high-risk cargo and the appropriate security measures to apply to these consignments must also be addressed. It is also crucial to pursue full implementation of the ICAO Standard requiring States to have supply chain security systems.

Further strengthening of air cargo security calls for better tools, not just an end to regulatory gaps. I am thinking here of technology and advance information on cargo shipments. Customs authorities and security regulators can enhance air cargo security by agreeing on how advance cargo information can be collected, assessed and used to mitigate risk.

To help assess the threat to the air cargo system, ICAO is developing the first-ever global Risk Context Statement which will help States to conduct their own risk assessments and to respond with appropriate security measures.

As we improve facilitation and the sustainability of the air cargo sector, we need to promote seamless operations by avoiding unnecessary duplication of security measures. Such "one-stop security" arrangements could be based on mutual recognition of measures that are different, but nonetheless equivalent.

Air cargo facilitation will benefit greatly from current efforts by ICAO, WCO and others to align their regulatory frameworks. At the same time, we also need to harmonize the standards in place in different countries. Industry operations are adversely affected when additional measures are introduced in an inconsistent way.

I cite these various challenges to illustrate why we must work together to deal with them. As you can appreciate, few challenges can be addressed without enhancing international cooperation — as called for by the 2010 Declaration on Aviation Security.

I am optimistic that our discussions over the next two days will highlight opportunities for aviation security and Customs authorities to collaborate to enhance the security and facilitation of air cargo. And this work should be done at the global, regional and State levels to achieve the greatest impact.

Your views on how to enhance air cargo security and facilitation are particularly important as we prepare to convene the ICAO High-level Conference on Aviation Security in Montréal. This important event will address the strategic issues facing regulators, the industry and other stakeholders, and delegates will consider, among other things, recommendations for a comprehensive air cargo security framework.

In closing, I look forward to seeing many of you at the High-level Conference which takes place at ICAO Headquarters from 12 to 14 September. Your participation would be greatly welcomed.

I wish to thank our Conference partners for joining with us to make this event possible. I am confident that our dialogue will produce real results that will benefit all stakeholders.

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