

Thank you Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Canada, it is with both pleasure and pride that I welcome you to this International Conference on Air Law.

I have two reasons to feel such pride. First, this Conference is being held in Montreal, a city that has always been a world centre and a focus for international activities. In addition, the city is proud of its dynamic aeronautics industry. A report was recently released highlighting this dual vocation of Montreal, and inviting the Canadian government to provide support in this regard. This is what we intend to do, as I am certain the people of Montreal will see from the fact that such an important meeting as this is being held in their city, particularly since it integrates these two dimensions of Montreal's vocation.

I have a second reason to welcome you with pride. Less than 18 months ago, speaking in this same hall, my colleague, Mr. Crosbie, the Minister of Transport of Canada, called for the development of a new instrument on airport security, with a view to the early convening of a Diplomatic Conference. That call was heard, Mr. President, and reflected in the unanimous adoption of Assembly resolution A26-4.

Further to that resolution, the ICAO Council convened a meeting of a special Sub-Committee, which worked on the basis of a report prepared by a special rapporteur. The Sub-Committee's report was reviewed by the Legal Committee, which produced the text this Conference has now been convened to adopt. This process has been an exceptionally swift one. This reflects the importance and the urgency which the peoples of the world, and in particular the travelling public, attribute to our continuing fight against international terrorism.

My country, Canada, has given this matter top priority. As early as September 23, 1986, here at ICAO we announced the establishment of a special program, to which ten million dollars were allocated, designed to support developing countries in their efforts to improve aviation security.

I would like to take this opportunity to give you a brief report on this initiative.