

Statement

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Ministère des
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Notes for an address by
the Honourable Monique Vézina,
Minister of State for Transport of Canada,
to a Diplomatic Conference
on International Air Law

MONTREAL

February 9, 1988.

Secretary of State
for
External Affairs

Secrétaire d'État
aux
Affaires extérieures

Canada

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.

As part of a project in the Caribbean region, security plans for 17 airports have been completed and we are now working to develop a security awareness program. Eight hundred thousand dollars of new security equipment is presently being delivered, with staff training on its application and upkeep following shortly. Courses on the use and maintenance of walk-through metal detectors were recently completed, and courses on new X-ray machines are planned for mid-February. To date, two of the three scheduled security training courses have been given to approximately 70 of the 100 planned participants. The third and final course will be offered later this month. We expect that the entire project in the Caribbean will be completed before the end of 1989.

As for our co-operation in other regions, the Canadian International Development Agency recently contracted with a Canadian firm to fulfill this mandate. This firm has already completed its first field mission to evaluate the security needs of certain local airport authorities, and plans to carry out three more before the end of the month. We will continue with this project for the next four years.

Security is also a concern of the International Aviation Management Training Institute, which was established in Montreal through a joint initiative of the Governments of Canada and Quebec. Since it opened its doors in 1987, the Institute has welcomed students from over 40 different countries. In addition to the current average of 10 hours of instruction on aviation security given in the regular curriculum, in 1988 the Institute intends to offer a 3-week course dedicated to aviation security management.

Mr. President, my intention in bringing these facts to the delegates' attention was to show that the problem of airport security is not an abstract one. Legal measures, however essential they may be, will not be enough to confront this problem. International co-operation, both bilateral and multilateral, is essential at all levels.

In this regard, I would like to express my government's concern with respect to the serious financial situation facing ICAO, which could have an impact on this co-operation. We are aware that severe contingency measures may be required to deal with this situation. While recognizing the need for restraint, we will work with other ICAO members to minimize the impact of such contingency measures on the important work of the Organization. Already, Canada has taken a concrete step in this direction by paying its 1988 assessed contribution on December 22, 1987.

Mr. President, I turn now to the business at hand, which is the adoption of a new instrument to extend the provisions of the 1971 Montreal Convention to acts of violence perpetrated at international airports. I would like to note at the outset that the solutions proposed by the Legal Committee were the object of thorough discussion and ample reflection. The Canadian delegation is satisfied with these elements of agreement, and does not intend to reopen debate on any of them. We will rather focus our attention on the four issues which the Legal Committee specifically referred to the Diplomatic Conference, namely:

- jurisdiction and extradition;
- preventive measures;
- participation of States in the new instrument if they are not parties to the Montreal Convention; and
- "aircraft not in service at the airport".

The Canadian delegation will return to these issues in the course of the debate, and, of course, will favour solutions which will lead to the widest possible participation by States in the new instrument.

The international community attaches great importance to the successful outcome of our work. The speed with which ICAO has proceeded since the adoption of Resolution A26-4 bodes well in this respect.

Similarly, the outstanding spirit of co-operation and understanding which characterized the work of the Legal Committee gives me reason to be optimistic. I am convinced that we will live up to the expectation of the international community and open the new instrument for signature at the conclusion of this Conference.

But above all, what will enable us to reach this goal is our shared conviction that international terrorism can be neither excused nor tolerated; it must be fought.

I know that all of us here will spare no effort to further protect civil aviation from this plague.

Thank you for your attention.