

The CEO Column

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As 2009 draws to a close it is clear that this has been a momentous year for GCAA. November was a particularly significant month, as we saw the official opening of the Sheikh Zayed Centre, and we also made the decision to join CANSO. I would like to reflect on the importance of these two developments and the significance they hold for the aviation industry in the UAE and the wider Middle East region.

The vision of the GCAA is for the UAE to take a leading position in the arena of the international civil aviation sector. We are achieving this by establishing and developing strategies and plans that ensure implementation of the best international standards and practices for safety and security in line with civil aviation approved regulations. Our state-of-the-art new Centre, and the access to CANSO's international network of ATM experts, are essential parts of that process.

The Middle East is the world's fastest-growing aviation region, and the GCAA is making important advances to help cope with the challenges of this growth. Some of our most recent activities include the opening of a new airway "A419" which connects UAE airports with KITAP in Saudi Arabia in close cooperation and liaison with air forces and defence. The new airway reduces the duration of flights, with consequent fuel and cost savings, as well as reduction in engine emissions.

The GCAA also developed a plan to implement the newest international air navigation system known as PBN – RNAV 1 on all arriving and departing flights, eventually facilitating air traffic flow and increasing the capacity of air routes. Abu Dhabi International Airport was the first airport to implement this system in the Middle East, in addition to the hosting of the PBN Implementation Design Course, which is integral to the control of capacity and regularity within the region's airspace.

We have also implemented surface-to-surface communications applications and upgraded our communications network to a world-class Aeronautical Message Handling System. The GCAA also recently deployed a new radar system (ADSB), the first of its kind in the Middle East to communicate directly with air navigation control more accurately than traditional aircraft radar images. We continue to recruit the best in the industry and spend significant sums on ongoing training and development of our people.

Looking forward to 2010, we see that the United Arab Emirates is seeking re-nomination for membership of the ICAO Council for the period 2010-2013 in the elections to be held in the eve of its 37th General Assembly session in Montreal, in September 2010. In seeking re-nomination, the UAE is continuing its efforts to maintain the gains achieved during the last term and to ensure an effective and constructive Arab presence in one of the most important specialised world organisations.

In short, we will continue to endeavour to create a framework for the UAE aviation industry that enables it to flourish and compete on the international stage. I am delighted that the GCAA has joined the CANSO Community, and I am sure that our partnership will strengthen aviation in Middle East to the mutual benefit of all.