



## **Speech of CANSO Director General Jeff Poole to the CANSO Middle East Conference 19 January 2015**

Welcome to the CANSO Middle East Conference. I am delighted that we have been able to coordinate this meeting with both the Future Air Transportation Systems Summit as well as the meeting on the Middle East Airspace Enhancement Plan or MAEP that starts tomorrow. All three events are interlinked and complementary. And it is good to see so many stakeholders come together with a real determination to provide workable solutions to meet the airspace challenges of the region.

My message at each event is that we are all aware of the problems in this region but we must harness the renewed determination of stakeholders to work in partnership to transform ATM performance in the region. An important umbrella for collective action is the Middle East Airspace Enhancement Plan or MAEP, to which CANSO is a committed partner.

For too long we have seen commendable efforts from the various stakeholders in the region but there have been too many disparate initiatives that have not always been coordinated. It is therefore vital that we all pool our resources and work together in harmony to achieve our goal of a safe, harmonised and efficient airspace across the region.

The Air Transport Action Group (ATAG), of which I am a Board Member, has carried out some great work in recent years to highlight the economic benefits of aviation globally and regionally. Its latest report, *Aviation: Benefits Beyond Borders*, showed that the air transport industry in the Middle East contributed \$66.8 billion to GDP in the region; tourism adds another \$48.9 billion; and some two million jobs are supported by aviation and tourism. By 2032 the number of jobs will grow to 4.4 million and the contribution to GDP is forecast to grow to \$341 billion, almost three times the 2012 figure.

What conclusions can we draw from these impressive figures? First, there is a direct link between growth in aviation and sustainable GDP growth. And second, aviation has a vital role in providing the connectivity that drives economic and social development and provides access to markets.

Fortunately, governments in the Middle East region do actually understand that aviation is a strategic asset. They have invested in world-leading airlines and in new high-capacity airports such as those in Doha and Dubai with the result that the region's share of global air traffic has risen from four percent to nine percent in just a decade.

While airlines and airports have posted extraordinary growth, what is failing to keep pace is the organisation of the region's airspace: it is fragmented and creates safety, efficiency and capacity challenges for the region; it is saturated with large parts out of bounds for civilian use, and it is uncoordinated at the regional level. Unless airspace is managed in a sustainable manner, it will become a major constraint to further growth and expansion and will jeopardise the expected economic benefits. I was very struck by the comments of Adel Ali, CEO of Air Arabia, who said that even though aircraft are now faster, the passenger journey has got slower.

CANSO has been advocating strongly for an end to fragmented initiatives, duplication of efforts and military restrictions. We are working with partners to develop a coherent, coordinated, regional strategic plan for efficient airspace management, the Middle East Airspace Enhancement Plan. We want to ensure that the future ATM systems will be able to meet the needs of this growing market. I see five key steps to making this happen.

### **Partnership and cooperation**

The first step is to ensure partnership and cooperation across States and all industry stakeholders in the region. To be effective, we must break down the silos between regulators, ANSPs and other partners. The transformation of ATM performance is only possible with the full support and involvement of States, ANSPs, airspace users, military organisations and airports in the region.

While this has been a problem in the past, there are grounds for some optimism. The ICAO Middle East Airspace Enhancement Programme (MAEP) is a key initiative that CANSO supports strongly to ensure that the planning and implementation of future ATM upgrades in the region are fully coordinated to provide an overall regional solution. It is meeting over the next few days to approve a number of projects, but as discussed yesterday, the meetings must be action-focused and deliverable-focused. Therefore the meetings must be empowered to make or progress decisions.

In addition, the Middle East ANSP, Airspace User and Stakeholder Engagement (MEAUSE) initiative provides a forum where airspace users and stakeholders can engage in dialogue with ANSPs, proving the benefits of working together. MEAUSE has the strong support of ICAO, IATA and other stakeholders, to raise awareness of the challenges facing the region and the need for much closer collaboration and integration. Its aim is to harmonise the future equipage plans of airspace users with the investment plans of ANSPs.

### **Seamless Airspace**

Second, we must strive to achieve seamless airspace in the Middle East region. Ahmed Al Jallaf, Assistant Director General UAE General Civil Aviation Authority, said yesterday that air traffic management needs regional attention. He gave full support to joint regional projects such as MAEP but stressed that we must take tangible actions to make MAEP a success. This is music to the ears of CANSO as the provision of safe, seamless, harmonised and efficient airspace globally is at the heart of CANSO's strategic plan for ATM, Vision 2020.

Our underlying philosophy is that the aviation business transcends national boundaries and airspace needs to be organised, and air navigation services need to be delivered, in line with the operational requirement of airspace users rather than according to national borders. There is far too much fragmentation in the region. For example, there used to be just one Flight Information Region (FIR) for the Arabian Peninsula based in Bahrain. Today, that has fragmented into six FIRs.

Regional cooperation between States is vital to ensure harmonised airspace. Our goal is to enable planes to navigate seamlessly across the whole region, across national borders and FIRs, selecting the most efficient routes.

In the future it should be possible to move away from the 'one State – one ANSP' model prevalent in this region towards more efficient ways to service provision. States can delegate service provision to other States and/or designate a service provider to provide service coverage for a larger airspace. This does not in any way diminish a State's sovereignty over its airspace; rather this delegation is a responsible and effective use of sovereignty that improves efficiency.

Some argue that we should be looking to develop a 'Single Middle East Sky' or sub-regional airspace blocks, but I believe that the lessons from Europe advise us to avoid over-prescriptive top down regulation. We should instead be looking to build from the bottom up by making cross border changes at the operational level. We need to be pragmatic and incremental; meaning the plan for the region must be coherent and allow each individual element to fit into the bigger picture.

### **Separation of regulation and service provision**

Third, CANSO firmly believes that the same organisation having responsibility for both regulation and service provision of ATM acts as a constraint. Most ANSPs in the region are owned and operated by the government bodies that regulate them. This can create conflicts of interest and hinder the implementation of performance-driven air navigation services. We believe that proper separation between regulation and service provision has the clear potential to unlock value, enabling ANSPs to concentrate on the delivery of efficient, cost-effective and customer-oriented air navigation services. This has worked remarkably well with NATS in the UK as an excellent example.

### **Military Airspace**

Fourth, we need to overcome the constraints caused by military airspace restrictions. Some forty percent of Middle East airspace is reserved for military use, even when it is not actually using that airspace, thus forcing civil traffic into increasingly congested corridors. This prevents today's aircraft from fully exploiting their sophisticated technologies; it is inefficient; it poses implications for safety; and it is not environmentally friendly.

So, we need to create better coordination and partnership between military and civil aviation and we can learn from experience in other regions. The progressive opening of military airspace to civilian operations in Europe, US, and Asia has been managed responsibly and

efficiently to the benefit of both sides. Such opening has allowed: flexible use of airspace; shorter routes; cost savings; fuel efficiencies; and fewer delays.

We would like to see far greater efforts made by governments to allow more flexible use of military airspace in the Middle East region as a win-win for both military and civilian users.

## **Technology**

Fifth, we must harness the amazing technology available in ATM today and in the near future to drive and even overtake these other issues. Technology will help to harmonise systems, processes, and traffic flows in a global way without reference to national borders or even land-based equipment. It will provide the revolution to free the Middle East of its present fragmentation and ATM constraints.

But we need to coordinate and synchronise technology better between aircraft, airports and ANSPs. And one of the main purposes of MEAUSE is to try to harmonise the future equipage plans of airspace users with the investment plans of ANSPs.

## **Vision 2020 and CANSO Middle East Strategy**

How do we make this happen? As you know, in 2013 CANSO launched Vision 2020, the first-ever strategic framework for the ATM industry, with 126 global and regional deliverables in the supporting Work Plan. Vision 2020 is the catalyst to transform global ATM performance; to enable airlines to fly in seamless airspace globally across 'invisible' borders. It is a very clear commitment from CANSO and the ATM industry to deliver and to create value for Members and stakeholders.

A key element of Vision 2020 is implementation of ICAO's Aviation System Block Upgrades (ASBUs). CANSO is providing assistance on implementation to those ANSPs that need it. We are fully involved in training and educating States and ANSPs on the ASBUs; we have organised ASBU seminars that help States assess their level of implementation and recommend their way forward; we have produced an ASBU Implementation Guide; and we are offering five-day ASBU implementation training courses around the world. I would love it if we could run one of these courses in this region, so if any Member is willing to volunteer to host a course please let me know.

How does Vision 2020 impact on this region? The CANSO Middle East Strategy is derived from the global Vision 2020 strategy but addresses the specific challenges of this region. The strategy lays out work streams aligned with the Vision 2020 work streams and provides specific objectives, desired outcomes and the steps needed to achieve them.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, keeping pace with the demand for air travel in the region is vital. The challenges for air traffic management must be addressed if the region's aviation industry is to continue its extraordinary success and its impressive contribution to the economies of the region. The aviation industry, States and other stakeholders must work closely together in partnership in order to create safe, seamless, harmonised and efficient airspace across the region.

The Middle East Airspace Enhancement Plan (MAEP) deserves strong support from all to ensure that it can truly become the single, robust framework that drives the necessary changes and developments in Middle East airspace. I am optimistic that MAEP will be action- and deliverable-focused.

And we need to focus on the five key areas I have outline today to make all this happen: bringing partners together for coordinated action; striving to achieve seamless airspace; separating regulation and service provision to improve the performance of ANSPs; freeing up military airspace; and harnessing the latest technology to improve airspace efficiency.

Thank you