

Address to the Opening Ceremony of the Fifth Pan-American Aviation Safety Summit

Distinguished dignitaries, delegates,
aviation professionals.

Good morning or, as we say in Papiamentu...Bon dia and welcome to the Fifth Pan-American Aviation Safety Summit and the Seventh Plenary of the Regional Aviation Safety Group-Pan America (RAZPA).

As the Minister of Transport, it is my great pleasure to address you this morning and to welcome you on behalf of the Government and People of Curacao to our island paradise.

When our Director General of the Curacao Civil Aviation Authority asked me to approve the hosting of this auspicious event, I made the decision without a moment of hesitation.

I am indeed happy for the opportunity to address you all to let you know that Curacao is aware of the excellent job being done by RAZPA through the efforts of States collaborating with industry to accomplish a marked improvement in aviation safety in the Americas.

In agreeing to host this meeting the Curacao wishes to demonstrate the Government's unwavering commitment to aviation safety.

By now it is common knowledge that the Curacao Civil Aviation Authority was placed in Category 2 of the FAA IASA program in January 2012. Given the enormous significance of air transport to our small island State, this sent the entire population into shock. On taking office, a detailed analysis of the situation was undertaken by my Ministry. I determined from the reports that the CCAA needed a leader who had the vision, knowledge, experience and courage to build the Civil Aviation Authority to be an effective and compliant organization with the required resources and capacity.

We are happy to report that your RAZPA State Co-Chairman, Oscar Derby, accepted the challenge and has been making excellent progress in rebuilding the Curacao CAA.

I gave my word to the ICAO Regional Director for North America, Central America, and the Caribbean, Mrs Loretta Martin that I would not rob RAZPA of their State Co-Chairman and this commitment too, is demonstrated in my Ministry's support for his work with RAZPA and in hosting this week of meetings.

As I noted earlier, Air Transport is of critical importance to our island. Like many other island States, our economy relies heavily on the sector for commerce, logistics, tourism and trade and the very mobility of our people.

In today's global market, beset by political discord, economic instability, safety and security concerns, and increasingly stringent requirement for quality and customer satisfaction at

competitive prices, Curacao aims to be in the front line to take advantage of air commerce opportunities to sustain our economy.

Is this possible? The famous American WW2 fighter Captain Eddie Rickenbacker once said *“Aviation is proof that given, the will, we have the capacity to achieve the impossible”* ... So, it is not impossible!!

Our commitment to a safe and viable air transport system lies at the heart of our strategy to meet national objectives.

It is therefore not by accident that we take pride in demonstrating this commitment and in welcoming this assembly of aviation professionals to our shores for a week of intense discussions and deliberations on the topic of Operational Safety in Air Transport in the Americas.

I wish to applaud all the persons responsible for organizing and sponsoring this week of meetings under the leadership of the RAZPA States and industry members and the Latin American

and Caribbean Air Transport Association, ALTA.

Further, I wish to commend RAZPA for its outstanding accomplishments over its six years of existence, in reducing the risk of fatal accidents in the Americas. The partnership that has been crafted between States and Industry is clearly a formula that makes a difference. I wish you continued success in your mission of identifying and managing risks to prevent fatalities.

On behalf of the Government and people of Curacao I extend to you our heartiest welcome to our “Dushi” Curacao and trust that your stay with us will be an enjoyable one, even with the packed agenda you have planned.

Our fine cuisine, beautiful beaches and curative turquoise waters will enrich you, body and soul, after each day of work.

“To most people the sky is the limit. To those who love aviation the sky is home”.

During the coming days, I hope you will create fleeting opportunities to bask under our sunny skies and make Curacao your home!

In closing, let me wish for you a successful Summit and Plenary and to urge you to continue the excellent work of this group. I also wish to congratulate Mrs Loretta Martin for the signal honour that has been bestowed on her and wish her all the very best for the future.

Without further ado, I hereby declare the Fifth ALTA Safety Summit and Seventh RAZPA Plenary open.

Masha danki and Tur kos Bon.