

**Comments from His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al-Nahayan
Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, UAE**

**2nd World Passenger Symposium
16 October 2012**

Good Morning, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to Abu Dhabi and the United Arab Emirates. I hope that you flew here.

The International Air Transport Association brings together the airlines of the world and provides incomparable service to the airline industry and its passengers. It has accomplished a great deal for such a young organization. After all, 100 years ago the world had not yet seen its first commercial company providing winged flight to passengers. It was only in 1914 that the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line incorporated into the world's first scheduled winged airline service and flew passengers across the seventeen-mile route at a whopping altitude of five feet above the waters of Tampa Bay. Now from 115 countries, 241 airlines have united in this association, and they all fly, I am happy to observe, at considerably higher altitudes.

And at those altitudes you wisely examine the often lofty issues that will engage you for the three important days of this World Passenger Symposium. I appreciate the vision and effort of the IATA in planning your impressive program and express my thanks to our own Etihad Airways in acting as your host.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is appropriate that you are meeting in the United Arab Emirates because the theme of this symposium is a theme marking the history of our country. We strongly promote creativity and innovation. We have innovated together to create a nation of ever greater value that provides ever-better experiences to our citizens. The President, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahayan, and the Vice President, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahayan, have vigorously encouraged innovation and have achieved stunning results.

Innovation in the field of air transport has resulted in our superb aviation infrastructure. Our government has fashioned air transport policies that signify our commitment to capitalize on our strategic location. Passengers and cargo that reach the UAE can directly reach practically any other part of the world. We are privileged to serve your industry as the natural bridge between east and west, north and south.

Furthermore, we are firm in our belief that allocation of capacity and competition should be driven and regulated by market mechanisms. Interventions by governments, still all too common, generally tend to impede the industry's ability to manage true demand and supply.

For example, false beliefs about government subsidies to certain airlines in our region have caused some governments to deny those airlines full access to their markets. Such actions harm not only the airlines but also the service providers and aircraft manufacturers that depend on a healthy, growing airline industry. Above all, such actions harm the interests of potential passengers who desire to travel from or to those countries. Such government intervention lacks justification. That is not to say, of course, that governments should not intervene in matters related to security, safety, air traffic management, competition law, and consumer protection. Those are justified interventions.

We also know that air transport by its very nature functions within an environment of bilateral and multilateral agreements and conventions. That practical and productive environment is, however, being threatened at regional and state levels by unilaterally drawn legislation such as the EU Emission Trading Scheme. Some states have also threatened to introduce national taxes under the pretext of environmental protection.

Many parties worry that such actions may be seen as unwarranted and may invite retaliatory responses, thus unsettling the entire aviation scene. We in the UAE strongly believe that the solutions to environmental concerns should be fair and balanced, the result of reasoned debate in the framework of a global initiative led by the International Civil Aviation Organization.

In the meantime, we are hopeful that governments will recognize and support the initiatives undertaken by airlines and manufacturers to work in partnership toward the resolution of environmental concerns. Joint endeavors have already resulted in the production of aircraft that are fuel efficient and environmentally friendly. Like many

other airlines, our UAE airlines are keen to benefit from such initiatives as indicated by the plans for their future fleets.

My friends, technological innovations undertaken by manufacturers and system providers in partnership with airlines have over the years positively affected both streams of this symposium, the profit stream and the customer stream. I trust that your innovative thinking here in Abu Dhabi will lead to further improvements. I hope, however, that you always keep in mind the indispensable role that your industry plays in our global well-being. Although we habitually marvel at the way in which the world wide web has connected us all to one another, you should take special note of these words spoken by none other than Bill Gates, the genius of Microsoft, who was here in Abu Dhabi last week. **“The Wright Brothers,”** said Bill Gates, **“created the single greatest cultural force since the invention of writing. The airplane became the first World Wide Web, bringing people, languages, ideas, and values together.”** **End quote.** I believe that, despite the power of the second World Wide Web, your airplanes have become even more important in bringing people, languages, ideas, and values together. For example, those elements are together in the United Arab Emirates largely because of the airplane. I do not exaggerate when I declare that a healthy, prosperous, world-passenger-oriented airline industry may be among the most potent forces in our quest for world peace.

Ladies and gentlemen:

The agenda you have before you is packed with issues vital to the future. Your meeting has brought together some of the most qualified women and men in the world of aviation to help analyze some serious matters and propose workable solutions. With the proposed solutions arising from your discussions and deliberations, must come a thorough understanding of the global and institutional context within which the solutions can be implemented.

You have an incredible opportunity for doing valuable work. The world depends on you. Our faith in the airline industry is well placed. You have shown an unparalleled instinct to withstand adversities caused by global economic downturns, natural disasters, and shifting governmental attitudes. Your resilience and determination to meet the world’s expectations have allowed you to innovate brilliantly in the past. As you look to the future in this symposium, we wish you well on your thoughtful flight.

Again, welcome to Abu Dhabi, where we are committed to participation in global progress, and where our stable and strong institutions, our motivated and committed citizens, and our visionary and able leaders promote continued innovation, growth, and positive change.

My best wishes for a successful and productive conference. Please fasten your safety belts!

Thank you.