

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening ladies and gentlemen.

First, I would like to thank World Birdstrike Association for inviting European Union Aviation Safety Agency to participate to this very interesting event and to address the participants.

It is not necessary to refer to the situation that Aviation is currently experiencing. This is well known, and I think that all of us have experienced the consequences of the crisis in our professional life and many times in our personal life.

In one of the virtual events that EASA organized last year, it was stated that despite the crisis, safety should always be our first priority. In difficult times, people tend to look into emerging issues and forget safety.

On Friday, it will be 12 years since the US Airways accident at Hudson River in New York that was caused by multiple bird strikes and thanks to very good piloting skills, there were no casualties. This event showed to the public the potential risks of the wildlife strikes and triggered a lot of actions by ICAO, States, aerodrome operators and aircraft and engine manufacturers.

In 2018, many of us participated in the WBA conference in Warsaw. It was a very good event where we had the opportunity to exchange ideas on how to enhance

wildlife hazard management. The outcome of the conference stressed the need for more collaboration between the key stakeholders but also confirmed that awareness have been increased and significant actions took place since the US Airways accident.

However, on the 15 August 2019 Ural Airlines Flight 178 after taking-off from Zhukovsky airport in Moscow, suffered a bird strike and crash landed in a cornfield 5 km past the airport. The aircraft carried 226 passengers and 7 crew members. Fortunately, all on board survived: 74 people sustained injuries, but none were severe.

This event is a reminder to all of us that we should never underestimate the potential risks of wildlife strikes. So, the question that needs to be asked is what should be done? The answer is not easy and the role of the different stakeholders needs to be considered.

ICAO Annex 14 already contains Standards and Recommended Practices for Wildlife Management, which is used by the States to prepare the National Regulations. However, we all know that a regulation cannot prescribe all the details and mere compliance does not ensure safety.

Nowadays, it is very common to talk about 'Big Data'. It is true that a proper analysis can give valuable information which can support targeted solutions, if followed by a proper risk assessment.

In our view, wildlife management needs highly competent personnel. We need to employ people that they have the educational background and knowledge and experience on wildlife behaviour as well as the effects of environmental conditions and human activities on wildlife. It is an area where aerodrome operations have a strong link with science, therefore it is very important that the wildlife management programme is managed by scientists.

But it is not only this. Wildlife management is not a one man show. It must be supported by operational personnel who knows how to perform the assigned tasks. Therefore, a robust training programme, which should include initial, recurrent and refresher training followed by a competency assessment and proficiency checks needs to be developed for each aerodrome. This is something that the National Aviation Authorities should focus. Nevertheless, it is not only the aerodrome operator that needs to have competent personnel. The National Aviation Authorities of the States need also to employ highly competent staff to ensure not only the regulatory compliance of the wildlife management programmes of the individual aerodromes but to evaluate their effectiveness as

well as to coordinate actions within the State to control activities and developments near aerodromes.

Another important issue is the use of technology. During the years, we have moved from the traditional shotguns to avian radars, lasers, acoustic devices, which are used for the dispersal or monitoring of wildlife. Some regulators have already developed some technical standards for such equipment. Is it something that we need to think of?

For the next two days, we have many interesting presentations which address different issues related to wildlife hazard management. It is a very good opportunity for all of us to listen and share ideas. We know that the situation is not ideal, however let's use this opportunity to our benefit.

Thank you very much for listening and I wish you a successful conference.