Speech - DG CAAI – Mr. Joel Feldschuh:

H.E Mr. Michaelides - Permanent secretary of Ministry of Transport and Communications, Mr. Erik Merckx - the Chairman of the seminar, the deputy Ambassador of the State of Israel to Cyprus Mr. Sami Abu Janeb, my friend Eran Ramot from Fisher Institute and last but not least Mr. Christos Petrou - CEO of the FSF-Med, Distinguished guests.

I'm grateful to Christos who honored me the privilege to address my short remarks to this very important regional seminar. The subject of the seminar represents better than anything the growing ties which have developed during the last years among Cyprus, Greece and the State of Israel in areas such as energy, tourism, culture, and above all transportation and aviation.

It takes only ten minutes since one takes off from Ben Gurion airport and finds himself in Nicosia FIR. Both countries share wide sea areas which are rich with natural gas and they plan to develop and use them for the benefits of the two states. Lately, a Search and Rescue agreement was signed between Cyprus and Israel and soon Larnaca airport may serve as the main Alternate to Ben Gurion Airport. Cyprus serves not only as the gate to Europe from Israel but also as the main passage for 90% of the whole international traffic to and from Israel. Air traffic to and from Israel is growing faster than the international average growth, consequently this gate is coping with great challenges following the military tension in neighboring areas. Hostile activities in Syria, Iraq, Sinai, Peninsula and Ukraine divert much of the traffic towards and from the east through this gate.

We are working very close with Cypriot authorities and enjoy collaboration from Nicosia control when delays are developing through this busy gate. We are aware to the processes which Cyprus ATC system are going through and encourage them to overcome them ASAP.

As for our side, I'm delighted to address you that on the June 2nd Israel will become in fact part of Eurocontrol through a comprehensive agreement which will be signed between the two sides. It is a good opportunity to thank the Cypriot government for its strong support within Eurocontrol.

Being a partner in Eurocontrol, we are aware to all the services which are provided by the organization and the commitment which we take upon us. We have good reasons to be optimistic regarding the flow control challenges that we are facing and it will strengthen the strong friendship relationships between Cyprus and Israel and will turn them, aviation wise, to one family.

With this very optimistic view I would like to wish us all a fruitful seminar.

Thank you