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(The Sola Conference Foundation).

Welcoming Remarks, Solakonferansen 2018, Monday September 17th.

Good morning everyone!

As chairman of the Board of the Sola Conference Foundation, I have the pleasure of welcoming you to Solakonferansen 2018. I welcome both former and new attendees. Welcome to lecturers, sponsors, master students and to the press.

A wise historian once said that the future is simple. "The tricky part is the past", he said. And past versus future, or now versus future rather, is precisely what we want to address at this year's conference. Let us gather around the crystal ball to see where the helicopter as a means of transport is heading.

The Sola conference Foundation has the main purpose of bringing together the people who can contribute to improve safety, quality and the environment in aviation. So, therefore, you are here now. And the good solutions we are seeking are necessarily ahead of us, somewhere in the future. Let's philosophize together.

The main theme of last year's conference was presentation of main differences in technology, difference in system thinking and safety thinking, between fixed wing operation and helicopter operation-offshore. Although there is a degree of approximation between these two industries, there is still room for improvement. In my opinion, helicopter leg behind. Surveys show that the helicopter passenger is not fully convinced that helicopter transport is safe, at all times. There are too many revealing moments he and she will notice during the flight and during preparation for flight. Certain safety drill and safety behavior is obliged. While a passenger in a regular plane is invited as a guest, and only presented to a brief precautionary demonstration on safety, the helicopter passenger must pass through a safety training for his role as passenger. Being a qualified offshore helicopter passenger can be perceived as an integrated part of the whole operation. The price for a high proactive safety behavior is on the expense of comfort. And if you're not comfortable, you do not feel safe neither. But, there is a cause for alarm here. The offshore passenger's voice for improvements may be overlooked as he cannot go to alternative carrier himself. It is the employer who decides.

It is all about mobility in the air. We are still more people flying, and more frequently. IATA's prognosis estimates that by 2050 there will be 16 billion air passengers around the globe, a multiplication of what we have today. This formidable growth creates a large market

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potential. And the battle for market shares automatically drives the aviation industry towards new technology and better aircraft. In this struggle, it is about strategic positioning and exploration of what operators and passengers are asking for.

Aviation is a highly competitive market and stakeholders and operators must always be aware of their position. And solutions to gain market share might lay in technology. If so, the engineers need to be involved at an early stage. As the commercial market expand, technology must also develop at the same rate. Aviation is by nature a tradeoff among economy, performance, payload and available technology. The question is where you want to operate and whether you can take a fair share of the market, or not.

For the fixed wing industry, a powerful motivator is in the passenger's requirements. The airline passenger is the market and wants comfort, efficiency, trust, stability and high safety. Manufacturers and operators who do not follow the airline's stated ambitions fall behind the competitor.

Innovation, ladies and gentlemen, is the key word. Innovation is the precursor for development. While development is a self-acting force, which more or less, live its own life, innovation on the other hand must be controlled. The question is whether development in the helicopter sector is going in the right direction. In general, there are many examples in the history indicating that innovations have been implemented too early, and integrated, before the idea was fully mature. Therefore, the expected utility and value were not achieved. A new idea or invention cannot be regarded as a true innovation before it has come to a practical use. In other words, it must reach the market.

Good design is usually defined as the good development of concepts that reduce conflicting factors, and at the same time create a win-win situation for whom the particular design touch. But chosen design may not end up as a final. It is important that all stakeholders continuously assess whether design has reached expectations. Offshore helicopter transport can, in my opinion, be observed as a complex ecosystem. Its existence must not be taken for granted. Imbalance in certain sectors might give nourishment to other sectors to take over. I am not sure that sea transport for personnel can be ruled out for good and ever.

Last year I queried two rhetorical questions. First; could classic solutions for helicopter constructions be challenged? Secondly; is the helicopter forced into an operating regime in which it does not fit? I ask the same questions again, based on the fact, that the basic idea of the helicopter is to hover, and not to be used as an airliner over long distances, with high load, over a long period of time.

Now we are back to the consumer's voice. The helicopter passenger. He literally sits in a cramped, noisy and uncomfortable gondola, hanging from one single point. The rotorhead. This vital point takes the passenger from departure to destination. But redundancy for technological failure related to that single point is limited.

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In an airplane, however, the passenger cabin is an integrated whole with the aircraft. With better safety and higher comfort as a gain. I challenge the helicopter manufacturers to let these two cabin concepts merge in lay out. So, passengers in the helicopter are given the same comfort and wellbeing as those travelling with airliners.

Another phenomenon is that substandard design can be subjected to technology transfer. This means that bad technological solutions which are not accepted in one regulatory regime are approved in another. One saw such a tendency during the last major grounding of EC 225. Such practices inhibit healthy innovation, and cause inequalities in cost and framework conditions in the market. Manufacturers should never act with protectionism, in order to support own interests.

There is also a historical controversy between past and future in traditional risk management. There are those who assert that the best decisions are based on quantification and numbers, determined by patterns of the past. And you find groups who base their decisions on more subjective belief about the future.

Perhaps the historian was right. The future is simple. We know what we want, and we know what makes the customer happy. Helicopter transport must be safe, comfortable and reliable, in all stages of flight. The difficult question is: why haven't we come further?

Remember; The time being right now has once been the future. It sometimes seems that the future of a helicopter is where the fixed wing already has been. In a dark moment, Wilbur Wright told his brother just before breakthrough with their aircraft; "Not within a thousand years will man ever fly", he said. Well, he proved himself wrong. Indomitable engagement and hard work led to innovations never been seen. Therefore, aviation is where it is today. The safest and most reliable means of transportation there is. Let us encourage optimism and lateral thinking. And let us call for improvements from those who develop technology and safety systems. The helicopter as a mode of transport deserves greater respect and attention. I will also use the opportunity to honor Avinor and The Norwegian Air Sports Federation who support electric aircrafts to be introduced in commercial aviation. This particular project is backed by the authorities and airlines. Buying an electric aircraft is a token of a real game changer to something that was completely unrealistic a few years ago.

I hope the conference program can give us some ideas where to go. I would like to thank our good sponsors, advertisers and lecturers, and all of you participants for your posting, making these three conference days possible. All in the name of safety and reflection.

I wish you all a good conference.

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For Safety in Aviation – the most important independent arena for debate and exchange of knowledge.

For those having new knowledge – those who are in need of knowledge – those who want to obtain knowledge (SKB/Oct 13).

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