



**Keynote Address
by the Secretary General
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar,
to the Eleventh Meeting of the North American, Central American and Caribbean
Directors General of Civil Aviation (NACC/DGCA/11)**

(Varadero, Cuba, 28 June 2023)

1. It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this 11th Directors General Civil Aviation (DGCA) Meeting for ICAO's North American, Central American, and Caribbean (NACC) Region.
2. I wish to begin by extending our deepest thanks and appreciation to the government and people of Cuba, both for their very warm hospitality, effective support, and for the wonderful venue and facilities we've been provided with here in Varadero.
3. And please let me also take a moment to present our newly appointed Regional Director for the NACC Regional Office, Mr. Christopher Barks, who will formally commence his duties at the end of July.
4. I would like to highlight from the outset of these remarks, the incredible appreciation which ICAO has for the many States and regional international organizations with whom we work so closely in the NAM/CAR Regions.
5. I would also like to emphasize that our ability to mobilize resources for needful States in this region remains fundamental to many current objectives I'll be raising with you here.
6. From a global standpoint, ICAO's latest analyses reveal clear signs of a strong recovery in air traffic, characterized by high demand, increasing airline confidence, and a range of regional improvements.

7. This is certainly the case for the Latin American and Caribbean Region, where 29.1 million passengers were transported last month, achieving a 99.8% recovery compared to 2019.
8. This comes as no surprise given that these regions achieved the highest passenger recovery rate in the world in 2022, but we should also continue to appreciate how improved coordination, and increased joint efforts among the many government and industry stakeholders, are playing such a key part in its recovery success.
9. I also wish to underscore the role which is being played in these efforts by the Implementation Support services which ICAO is now providing on a more holistic and integrated basis.
10. These are being taken advantage of by many NAM/CAR States, and I wish to recognize and applaud those Champion States and donors which have been so instrumental to realizing this international support for the NACC region.
11. Speaking of training, I would take this moment to congratulate the DGs that completed the Civil Aviation Master Plan session in yesterday's Workshop, where they learned more on how to enhance their national strategic planning to strengthen their CAAs' governance and performance.
12. And I would also like to congratulate the NACC Regional Office, which has helped foster a number of collaborative successes through its data-driven approach, and Systemic Assistance Programme.
13. This 11th DGCA meeting will address many high priority topics for us today, pertaining to aviation Safety, Security, Sustainability, Resilience, Cooperation in Implementation Support, Gender Equality, and the Ratification of International Air Law Treaties.
14. I'd like to begin on the topic of sustainability, following on recent updates I've provided on the adoption of the Long-term Global Aspirational Goal (LTAG) at our Assembly last October, and focusing more today on the role of lower carbon sustainable aviation fuels.
15. Yesterday's session of the DG workshop was a good opportunity for all the States and the industry to engage on LTAG and Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) priorities.

16. SAF are an important near-term CO2 emissions reduction solution for civil aviation, and an area of multilateral development which is now engaging some new and very enthusiastic partners for air transport from the global finance and energy sectors.
17. Preparing your countries to take best advantage of this energy revolution in aviation, notably with the tools and the Assistance, Capacity-building and Training for Sustainable Aviation Fuels (ACT-SAF) programme ICAO has placed at your disposal to do so, is **the first priority** I would raise with you today.
18. Our third Conference on Aviation Alternative Fuels (CAAF/3) will be taking place in Dubai this November, and your participation there will help ICAO to set new targets and drive increased capacity, partnership, and ambition in this area.
19. Innovation, including green innovation, is **the second key priority** I wish to raise with you.
20. ICAO is monitoring very rapid progress in the areas of Remotely-piloted and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (RPAS/UAS), in addition to Advanced Air Mobility, and we are actively addressing the new and amended standards which will be required to enable these new capabilities in air transport.
21. We are also interfacing with industry and new entrants at events such as our Drone Enable Symposium, the next of which is scheduled for December of this year, and we are well underway on the planning for the first ICAO Advanced Air Mobility Symposium, planned for September of next year. In between ICAO will hold the 2024 ICAO Innovation Fair in March 2024. All these events will be held at ICAO headquarters.
22. I'd also like to note that our new partnership with the International Forum for Aviation Research achieved its first result earlier this month, with the publishing of their scientific assessment of Urban Air Mobility.
23. NACC States are encouraged to continue, with necessary support from industry stakeholders, all ongoing efforts towards the maturation and implementation of UAS registration, identification, and tracking systems, taking into account as appropriate guidance material in the ICAO unmanned aircraft systems traffic management (UTM) Framework.

24. You are also encouraged to take into account existing guidance material, including the ICAO Model UAS Regulations, and to continue sharing information and exchanging best practices regarding the regulation of unmanned aircraft operations, including through ICAO's UAS Toolkit.
25. A **third priority** I wish to draw your attention to today concerns the end to the pandemic, which is of course very welcome news for the world.
26. Global connectivity and supply chains are now almost fully back to normal, but it is imperative for us to stay connected and focused on building from the strong pandemic foundation of coordination and response we established, and to continue strengthening our global public health crisis preparedness and management frameworks.
27. My thanks go out again to the NACC States who contributed to that global effort through the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force, and I must urge all NACC States to implement the High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC) recommendations addressed to them, and to increase implementation of Annex 9 provisions to facilitate the recovery and resilience of air transport from the COVID 19 pandemic, and future public health emergencies.
28. We must remain cognizant of the fact that multiple sectors need to collaborate on facilitation matters, and that National Air Transport Facilitation Committees are the best solution to achieve this.
29. NACC States should also be planning now for future facilitation developments like the ICAO Digital Travel Credential (DTC).
30. This development will build upon recent investments in ePassports, and provide a pathway for the implementation of improved processes that are more resilient and sustainable.
31. A digital credential must be underpinned by trusted procedures for issuance, and so efforts must be reinforced to ensure Evidence of Identity and Document Issuance and Control, two critical elements of an effective Traveller Identification (TRIP) Strategy.
32. ICAO is therefore highly encouraging countries to consider near-term investments in their document issuance and verification capabilities, and modernized infrastructure.

33. And I wish to applaud those NACC States which recently joined the ICAO Public Key Directory to ensure improved trans-national cooperation and readiness for future challenges.
34. Capacity building by ICAO and the wider international community will make an important contribution to these efforts, and there are training courses, mentorship programmes and other resources already available.
35. Challenges still remain to the recovery of air connectivity and flight frequency in some areas in the Caribbean, due in part to the runaway inflation which is affecting so many countries and regions.
36. Another area where collaboration will help us to realize more cost-effective and robust solutions is aviation cybersecurity, and here too we need to see a higher level of regional commitments and engagement in order to achieve success.
37. Building an innovative and resilient aviation system of tomorrow will further rely on overcoming protectionist approaches and opening the door to liberalization efforts, so as to unlock all the socio-economic benefits that aviation connectivity offers.
38. ICAO is therefore continuing its work on a Draft Convention on Foreign Investment in Airlines, as well as assessing the need for a multilateral agreement on the liberalization of air cargo services in line with our Long-term Vision for International Air Transport Liberalization.
39. In this regard I would draw your attention to the ICAO Air Services Negotiation Event, taking place in Riyadh this December.
40. A final point I wish to speak on today concerns the presentation you'll be receiving from our Legal Bureau's Deputy Director on the "Ratification of International Air Law Instruments".
41. I personally strongly believe that a unified global legal framework contributes to the orderly and safe development of international civil aviation, and it is well worth noting that a large number of ICAO treaties have now been ratified by almost all ICAO Member States.
42. However there are also recent treaties which, while in force, have not yet reached universal acceptance because a large number of States still have to ratify them.

43. I am thinking here in particular of the Montreal Convention of 1999 on air carrier liability, the Beijing Convention and Protocol of 2010 on aviation safety and security, and the Montréal Protocol of 2014 on unruly and disruptive passengers.
44. There are also other ICAO treaties which are widely accepted in principle, but have not yet entered into force, for example the 2016 decisions to increase the number of members on the ICAO Council and its Air Navigation Commission.
45. ICAO has assistance it can provide you in these efforts, but we must ultimately rely on civil aviation administrations to closely follow up with their authorities and periodically inform the Regional Office of their State's progress towards ratification.
46. In concluding today, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to recall how the NAM/CAR Regions continue to face challenges with respect to their overall air connectivity, despite their status as one of the most inviting and sold-out tourism destinations in the world.
47. ICAO recognizes that your countries share distinct sustainable development challenges, and I wish to assure you that our Headquarters and Regional Office remain fully committed to working as One ICAO to help you address them, and especially for Small Island Developing States.
48. We are also seeking and realizing new partnerships with lenders and donor institutions and assisting the region through this support in meeting some of its more pressing budgetary and personnel resource challenges.
49. We look to CARICOM to help increase this momentum, and to drive new and positive results working hand-in-hand with ICAO.
50. Finally, I wish to give you my personal reassurance that ICAO is committed to transforming itself to more efficiently support improved global performance in all our Strategic Objectives. In this regard, I will be presenting to you on ICAO's Transformational Objective during the meeting.
51. Lastly, I would like to recognize here our Regional Offices in Mexico City and Lima Offices, led by the Acting NACC Regional Director Mr. Julio Siu, and our South America Regional Director Mr. Fabio Rabbani, for enhancing their joint work for the benefit of the entire Pan-American Regions.

52. On that note I thank again the Government of Cuba for hosting us and wish you all a very productive meeting.
53. Thank you.