



**Closing address  
by the Secretary General of the  
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)  
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar  
to the 35th McGill University Model United Nations (McMUN)  
(Sheraton – 28 January 2024)**

1. Honorable members of the dais, distinguished delegates, as the Secretary General of ICAO, it is my great pleasure to address this year's McGill Model United Nations Conference.
2. I firstly want to congratulate each of you for being here as a representative of your country.
3. I trust that over the past few days you have gained valuable insights into the workings of the UN through your general assemblies, specialized agencies, and crisis committees, which I hope were quite engaging and enjoyable.
4. In my remarks this evening, and especially noting your focus on diplomacy at this year's McMUN, I wanted to share some insights about ICAO, and the importance of diplomacy more generally within the UN and beyond.
5. As a specialized agency, ICAO does its part in the United Nations by helping all 193 ICAO Member States work together to establish policies, plans and standards for international civil aviation in the areas of safety, security, efficiency, environment, as well as economic and legal matters.
6. This provides a global foundation of operational and procedural certainty for airports, airlines, aircraft, and air traffic controllers, and the entire travelling public, to name just a few of the global stakeholders in our community.
7. ICAO's efforts also directly contribute to 15 of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which you probably alluded to in your own speeches this week.

8. The SDGs are our common roadmap toward a sustainable future for the world, and that includes the aviation sector.
9. Among ICAO's diverse priorities today, spanning innovation, transformation, and gender equality, I want to highlight States' recent commitment to achieving carbon-neutral air transport by 2050 through their international diplomacy conducted at ICAO.
10. This commitment reflects a history of sustainable achievements, and supports an ambitious agenda aimed at fostering greater environmental responsibility within the aviation community.
11. Our path to a decarbonized future for aviation is a complex one, and close cooperation among countries remains key to fully leveraging the technologies needed to realize the sector's cleaner energy transition.
12. Effective diplomacy is critical to success in this area, as countries have to work not only with each other, but with industry, civil society, and other stakeholders.
13. In a very similar vein, the work you have been engaging in during these simulations reflects a commitment to understanding, dialogue, and multilateralism, the very hallmarks of the diplomatic process.
14. A Model UN, after all, is more than just a stage for role-playing, and it serves as an important forum where future leaders are shaped.
15. The soft skills you hone here – critical thinking, communication, conflict resolution, and empathy – are what makes great leaders and great diplomats stand out from the crowd.
16. I wish to thank every one of you for your energy and enthusiasm in international relations, and extend my invitation and hope that I will see some of you working in multilateralism, maybe even at ICAO and in the aviation sector.
17. The solutions you have proposed within these exercises may well become the blueprints for more prosperous and sustainable societies in the years ahead, and as always, it will be the honour and privilege of international aviation to connect and unite them.

18. In concluding, I wish to draw attention to the fact that 2024 commemorates the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Convention on International Civil Aviation – the agreement which established ICAO.
19. The drafters of our Convention had a noble vision in recognizing the importance of diplomacy in connecting our world and its cultures to foster peace, cooperation, and prosperity; and today, thanks to their foresight, we have a global air transport network that is renowned for its connectivity and exemplary safety and efficiency.
20. There is much work to be done, but their vision laid a solid foundation for us to build upon as we navigate the challenges and opportunities of the future.
21. As UN Secretary-General Guterres recently noted:  
  
*“More than ever, we need global solidarity. We need the United Nations. And the United Nations needs you – your energy, creativity, courage, and commitment. The UN is proud to be your ally. And we count on you to be a force for positive change, now and in the future.”*
22. I thank you all for your dedication and commitment to seeking progress based on mutual understanding, and that strives for solutions achieving mutual benefits. I look forward to your generation’s diplomacy and leadership, making this world of ours a better place for all.
23. Thank you.