



**Opening keynote
Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar
to Routes Americas 2024
19 March 2024
Virtual Remarks**

1. As the Secretary General of the International Civil Aviation Organization, ICAO, I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to speak at your Routes Americas 2024.
2. I regret that I was not able to join you personally in Bogotá.
3. Routes Americas 2024, has brought senior industry professionals from airlines, airports, and destinations together to address a topic that is not just at the heart of the development of our own industry, but also of the countless sectors worldwide that depend on air connectivity: "Do New Air Routes Forge Markets, or Do Emerging Market Opportunities Soar New Routes?"
4. This question touches at the reason why 80 years ago, celebrated this year, the contracting States of the Chicago Convention created ICAO.
5. They mandated it to facilitate the establishment of common standards, strategies, and concepts that would permit the safe, secure, and sustainable development of air transport at the global scale.
6. As its Secretary General, it is my privilege to share what we have learned, what we expect to see, and how the answers to this question can transform the aviation sector, not only in the Americas, but worldwide.

7. This region, with its unique historical and geographical characteristics, offers both business opportunities and challenges. As the center of gravity in global aviation shifts south and east, we are prompted to reflect on whether our routes are adapting to this trend. Are we capitalizing on emerging market opportunities, or are we tethered to traditional north-south traffic patterns?
8. Separated by vast oceans, challenging mountain chains, the Amazon jungle, and often characterized by centric approaches within its States, we must question if regional connectivity is optimal. Are we truly maximizing the potential to better connect people and cultures, or are there untapped opportunities lying before us?
9. In Santiago, Chile, on April 14, 2023, a significant milestone was reached in this regard, with a groundbreaking declaration emerging from a gathering of Civil Aviation Authorities, industry leaders, and partners.
10. This declaration marked a collective commitment to transform South America's civil aviation. The South American State DGCAs and Representatives from the United States FAA, European EASA, and industry associations such as IATA, ALTA, CANSO, and ACI-LAC, converged to outline a strategic course for sustainable growth and development across six pivotal pillars: competitiveness, environmental sustainability, human resources, effective planning, CAA governance, and innovation.
11. This commitment was an extension of efforts initiated during the IWAF held in Fortaleza, Brazil, in 2018 with the Declaration to promote Connectivity through the Development and Sustainability of Air Transport in the Pan-American Region - Vision 2020-2035.
12. It signifies a resolute dedication to fostering a competitive environment, promoting collaboration, investing in human resources, implementing effective plans for industry growth, enhancing governance practices, and encouraging innovation.
13. The recent declaration mirrors ICAO's Strategic view, aligning seamlessly with our global vision. The declaration's pillars resonate with ICAO's broader goals.

14. Among these, the commitment to sustainability harmonizes with our emphasis on reducing the aviation sector's carbon footprint and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. This is a key priority for ICAO that I would like you to keep front of mind at this event.
15. I am encouraged by the efforts that States and industry in this region have been embarking on.
16. In Policy, we see the United States embarking on the Sustainable Aviation Fuel Grand Challenge – with targets on domestic production; Grants, and tax and production credits through the Inflation Reduction Act. Brazil also has an integrated clean energy policy, with a mandate for CO₂ emissions reductions through the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel, or SAF.
17. We also observe many airlines – the likes of LATAM, United, and many more, and airports, committing to SAF use, participating in offtake agreements.
18. Some are even taking an additional step upstream, by supporting SAF research and development, and by investing in SAF production.
19. I am also encouraged by the consortium led by SGP BioEnergy collaborating with the Government of Panama for the construction of a SAF facility in the coming years. It is expected to become the largest advanced biorefinery and SAF production platform in the world.
20. All of this represents very concrete progress towards achieving the Long-Term Global Aspirational Goal of net-zero carbon emissions from international aviation by 2050, or LTAG, which States agreed to at the historic 41st Session of the ICAO Assembly in 2022.
21. It also represents progress in terms of the Global Framework adopted at the Third Conference on Aviation and Alternative Fuels (CAAF/3) held in Dubai in November last year. Under this Framework, States are striving to achieve a collective global aspirational Vision of reducing CO₂ emissions in international aviation by 5% by 2030, through the use of SAF, Lower Carbon Aviation Fuels, and other aviation cleaner energies.
22. State Action Plans enable all Member States to establish a long-term strategy on climate action for the international aviation sector, involving all parties at a national level. I am happy to announce that 77%, or 27 out of 35 States in the region have already done so, higher than the global average.

23. ICAO itself is doing its part too.
24. The ICAO Assistance, Capacity Building and Training for SAF, or the ACT-SAF programme, provides training, feasibility studies, support for SAF certification and policy development, and implementation of specific SAF projects for States. We now have 150 partner States and Organizations, including 26 States from the region, and we will welcome your participation in this effort.
25. ICAO is also preparing for operationalizing the ICAO Finvest Hub initiative, and expediting work on a climate finance initiative or funding mechanism under ICAO.
26. I would also like to briefly highlight that the 2024 ICAO Seminar on Green Airports will be held next month. I hope to have your participation as we explore the broad spectrum of airport activities and operations, ranging from net-zero roadmaps, innovations towards cleaner energy in the green transition, sustainable infrastructure, and adaptation.
27. I am under no illusion of the scale of the decarbonization challenge the aviation sector faces – we are well known for being a hard to abate sector. That said, sustainability represents our license to grow, and that means translating purpose into action.
28. Aviation has overcome tremendous challenges throughout its history, and the climate challenge is the most significant one yet. But I am convinced that by uniting all stakeholders across the aviation ecosystem and across the globe, we can do it. That is the second key thought I would like you to take away today.
29. Now, as we navigate the evolving aviation landscape, the South American declaration and ICAO's Strategic View form a cohesive narrative. Both envision a safer, more sustainable, and interconnected global aviation landscape.
30. The collaboration showcased in Santiago last year serves as an inspiring model, reinforcing the collective vision for the future of international civil aviation.

31. For regions like the Americas, which are full of potential, investments in modern infrastructure, technological advancements, and fostering collaborations are essential steps toward a seamlessly connected future.
32. Well-connected airports and excellent networks make countries more attractive to multinational corporations, leading to increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). These investments create jobs, stimulate economic growth, and promote technological transfer.
33. Airlines have a vital role to play in shaping this future - through their network planning, route development, partnerships, and emerging business models, which have been improved by a liberalized operating environment for airlines.
34. Liberalization has in fact been one of the main drivers of air connectivity.
35. The continuous growth of air traffic, along with measures enabling expanded market and capital access for air transport, have resulted in enhanced connectivity.
36. This in turn has delivered sustainable economic development benefits at that State and regional levels.
37. Closing the loop, these benefits have come back to aviation in the form of stronger carriers and better air transport infrastructure.
38. Worldwide, ICAO is advocating for the liberalization of air services for this very reason.
39. The third and final key message I would like to give to you today is in fact an invitation: I would like to invite you all to think about how you can join ICAO and support us in this crucially important advocacy, that stands to benefit everyone here very significantly. Airlines and all stakeholders, including governments, airports, air navigation service providers and industry bodies, must collaborate effectively to maximize the potential of air connectivity.
40. Before concluding, I would like to briefly look forward over the coming decades.

41. The ICAO vision stands as our response to the dynamic challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Shaped by factors such as the energy transition, air traffic growth, climate change impacts, technological advancements, and evolving passenger demands, it outlines a comprehensive roadmap for the aviation sector.
42. Key highlights of our strategic views include a commitment to sustainability, environmental stewardship, resilience, adaptability, and inclusivity. We are prioritizing workforce development, gender equality, and strategic partnerships to ensure the aviation sector's growth aligns with social expectations and meaningful, inclusive, and equitable sustainable development worldwide.
43. Concluding now, I would like to invite you to reflect on the transformative power of aviation, and on how we can encourage others to collectively embrace it.
44. Let us continue to forge new routes, that not only connect destinations, but also foster economic development, cultural exchange, and global collaboration.
45. The aviation sector, with its inherent capacity for innovation and adaptability, is poised to play a pivotal role in shaping a more sustainable and interconnected world.
46. Thank you.