

**Remarks by the ICAO Secretary General
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar,
to the NACC/DCA/12 Meeting**

(Hotel Umaya, Belize, 9 July 2024)

1. It is my pleasure to be present today in this beautiful place, an idyllic peninsula with sandy beaches, clear waters and a charming village, and famous for the warmth and solidarity of its people.
2. It is a great honour to attend this 12th meeting of North American, Central American, and Caribbean Directors of Civil Aviation. This gathering is especially significant as we celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Chicago Convention's signing. What better location to unite this diverse region in a conversation on the future of aviation than the beautiful country of Belize, reflecting both the Caribbean and Central America.
3. As you are aware, aviation is in a phase of transformation, driven by the need for more sustainability and resilience, inclusion of diverse talent, digitalization and automation, and integrating new entrants into the aviation system. Innovation is firmly anchored in aviation's DNA, and this event provides an important forum for an exchanging of ideas to address current and future challenges and opportunities of our sector. I look forward to discussing how ICAO proposes to face these challenges after the opening session, and I very much welcome your feedback.
4. I am quite interested in the new meeting dynamic the ICAO NACC Regional Office is implementing in this NACC/DCA Meeting, with overarching panels and working sessions on critical topics and projects that are shaping the region. Your full and active participation are essential to the success of this meeting, and we encourage your feedback on the format so that we can continuously improve our service to you, leaders in ICAO Member States and Territories.
5. Early in the agenda of this meeting, we will address progress in improving aviation security and facilitation. This year is the 50th anniversary of Annex 17 and the 75th anniversary of Annex 9, and the ICAO Council has named this the Year of Facilitation. I am pleased to see such a strong presence of colleagues representing the aviation security community, and I look forward to a dynamic and productive discussion on this critical topic.

6. The collaboration among States with ICAO and other international civil aviation entities is key. This is especially important given the differences in size and resources among States. Moreover, we must consider that air transport is a crucial enabler for socio-economic development. ICAO is proud of the strong collaboration that exists in the ICAO North American and Caribbean Air Navigation Regions. This is demonstrated in various ways, such as the support to the Regional Safety Oversight Organizations, ACSA and CASSOS, the provision of Search and Rescue, collaboration on aircraft accident and incident investigation, airspace management, and many others.
7. The current efforts to relaunch the Caribbean Regional Safety Oversight Organization (RSOO), Caribbean Aviation Safety and Security Oversight System (CASSOS), are also recognized and encouraged. Regional cooperation through CASSOS will be critical to the success of its members to keep pace with the ever-demanding standards of our evolving sector.
8. I highly encourage the political leadership of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) States, the ICAO NACC Regional Office, and our generous partners and stakeholders, to support the re-establishment of a strong CASSOS. It must have the resources and commitment to fulfil its mission of advancing safety and security oversight in the Caribbean.
9. This type of collaboration will be key to advancing the implementation of ICAO Standards and recommended practices (SARPs). We look forward to your ideas on what else ICAO can do to support you in this regard. Please share your thoughts during this afternoon's working session and tomorrow morning's presentations. I am encouraged to see the number of aviation industry partner organizations here at this meeting and would especially like to recognize the State of Qatar for coming such a long way. This is a strong signal of your continued support of the NACC States. ICAO recognizes and appreciates the support of all of our partners—we truly could not do what we do without you.
10. As many of you know and have experienced, the aviation industry is facing a shortage of qualified personnel, which has proven to be a challenge to maintaining trained personnel within regulatory authorities and service providers. We must do more to recruit and retain highly qualified personnel, and one way to do this is to encourage greater participation of women in aviation. This means not only hiring a more diverse workforce but ensuring that we address barriers they face once they are in our sector. Tomorrow, we have a diverse panel discussing gender equality in aviation. I look forward to hearing their insights on how ICAO can accelerate progress in this critical area.

11. Considerable advances have been achieved in Environmental Protection activities. I wish to highlight the high level of voluntary participation in the ICAO Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA), as well as States' willingness to prepare State Action Plans on CO2 Emissions Reduction Activities. These plans showcase actions and advancing initiatives in environmental protection.
12. I also commend all NACC States for their commitment in signing the Assistance, Capacity-building and Training for Sustainable Aviation Fuels (ACT-SAF) programme of ICAO, which will promote the development of sustainable aviation fuels. We will need all of these programmes and more to achieve the long-term global aspirational goal of net zero carbon emissions from aviation by 2050. I look forward to hearing your views on how we can do more to advance in this area.
13. We know more needs to be done to improve aviation connectivity, especially within the Caribbean region. More direct aviation connections not only increase economic output and reduce costs, but they also reduce aviation's environmental footprint. I look forward to the panel on connectivity that will take place on Thursday, and eagerly await the recommended actions that our distinguished panel members will suggest.
14. Before closing, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the ICAO Regional Office in Mexico City for their outstanding collaborative work with all the NACC States and Territories, and for encouraging regional cooperation as part of the sustainable solution for States to continue to develop a safe, secure, seamless, and sustainable aviation system, making aviation a key vector of the economic growth in the region.
15. In concluding today, I would once again like to thank our hosts, the Government of Belize, led by Prime Minister John Briceño; the CEO of Blue Economy, Ms. Kennedy Carillo; Director General of Civil Aviation, Mr. Nigel Carter, and your entire team for your wonderful hospitality in hosting this important event. I look forward to productive discussions and concrete outcomes that will shape the future of aviation in our region.