



**Opening Remarks by the
Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar
to the NGAP Global Summit**

Durban, South Africa | 12 August 2025

1. Every time we board an aircraft, our safety and comfort depend on the skills of dozens of aviation professionals, most of whom we never see. These professionals represent just a fraction of the global aviation workforce that keeps our world connected.
2. By the time today's toddlers are graduating from high school, ICAO forecasts that global air transport will need over one million cabin crew alone.
3. We will need almost 700,000 aircraft maintenance engineers and technicians, and almost as many pilots.
4. Over 130,000 air traffic controllers will need to be trained and recruited.
5. These figures represent just a few key aviation professions. Beyond these traditional roles, there are many exciting new careers emerging from today's rapid technological advancements in aviation.
6. Revolutionary technologies are reshaping our sector. Automation, AI and advanced air mobility are transforming our airspace. Digitalization and data analytics are enhancing operations. Sustainability solutions are driving our path to net-zero emissions.
7. Meanwhile, as air traffic grows to connect all communities, we will need professionals across all core aviation functions, from operations and regulatory to commercial and customer service positions.
8. This vast and evolving workforce requirement is precisely why the Next Generation Aviation Programme, or NGAP, is a High-Level Priority under ICAO's Long Term Strategic Plan for 2050.
9. This plan aims to deliver air connectivity to everyone, everywhere, while eliminating fatalities and reducing emissions to net zero.

10. The 2025 NGAP Global Summit will be remembered as a key milestone in the scaling up and refinement of this programme as we achieve these ambitions.
11. That is why I would like to express our deep gratitude to the Department of Transport of South Africa and the South African Civil Aviation Authority for hosting this decisively important event.
12. The commitment of the Minister of Transport of South Africa, Ms Barbara Creecy, and the Director of the Civil Aviation Authority Ms Poppy Khoza, to advance aviation workforce development across Africa, and beyond, is a demonstration of the leadership our industry needs.
13. I also wish to recognize and sincerely thank our speakers. The generous contribution of their expertise elevates this Summit and guides the continued implementation of our NGAP strategy.
14. I would like to extend ICAO's appreciation to all international and regional partners, and to all the young participants who have travelled here from across the world to take part in this global dialogue. The future of aviation must be shaped with you, not just for you.
15. It is also especially fitting that we gather here in Africa, where the potential for workforce development is especially significant.
16. Africa's young and growing population creates a unique opportunity to build regional capacity and the capability to respond to both local and global aviation workforce needs. This is key to unlocking the full potential of air transport in Africa, connecting Africans to each other and to the world.
17. While Africa may not see some of the demographic shifts challenging aviation elsewhere in the world, many of the issues we see at the global level are a factor here too.
18. Over the next three days, we will seek to better understand these challenges.
19. Our sessions will focus on improving workforce planning and forecasting, and we will examine how artificial intelligence, automation, and digitalization are transforming work in aviation.
20. We will address the need to rethink certification systems, regulatory frameworks, and workforce policies, and we will explore how to align academic programmes and career pathways with the evolving needs of the aviation system.

21. We will promote capacity building, resource mobilization, and address the barriers to aviation careers. We will strengthen cross-sector collaboration between States, academia, training centers, industry, and civil aviation authorities.
22. Most importantly, we will also provide a platform for youth to voice their aspirations, challenges, and ideas; and the opportunity to call on the sector to evolve with their generation in mind.
23. This is how we can truly ensure that our approach is informed by the needs and desires of those who need to recruit, those who want to be recruited, and those who will play a critical role in connecting the two.
24. All the panel sessions will feed into an NGAP Call to Action, which will be the first of its kind.
25. This Call to Action will provide a collective roadmap that encourages States, industry, education institutions, and partners to take concrete steps in support of aviation talent development.
26. This call to action will be incorporated in the ICAO NGAP working paper that will be presented to the 42nd session of the ICAO Assembly.
27. The resolutions deliberated there by Member States will be binding, and they will provide a common reference for the way forward.
28. This Summit offers an opportunity for everyone here to determine the course of the human aspect of aviation for decades to come.
29. Your work here will be key to ensuring aviation delivers its full potential worldwide, and just as importantly, that all youth have the opportunity to live their full potential through aviation.
30. What is also exciting is that this Summit coincides with the launch of our new ICAO Global Ambassadors Programme.
31. It is a flagship initiative that will mobilize passionate aviation professionals from around the world to serve as role models, advocates, and messengers for our industry.
32. These dedicated volunteers will visit schools, mentor youth, and engage with communities to make aviation careers more visible and accessible to all.

33. By building this global network of ambassadors and champions, we are creating a powerful force that will help us reach the next generation of aviation professionals in every corner of the world.
34. Together, through the NGAP initiative and the ICAO Global Ambassadors Programme, we are building the bridge between the aspirations of today's youth and the opportunities of tomorrow's aviation sector.
35. These ambassadors will carry our message far beyond this Summit, inspiring and guiding the next generation wherever they are.
36. It is now my pleasure to share with you the launch video for this flagship programme, which I hope will inspire you as much as it inspires us.