



**Remarks by the  
Secretary General of the  
International Civil Aviation Organization  
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar  
to the Special Summer Meeting  
of ECAC Directors General of Civil Aviation**

*(Bern, Switzerland, 28 August 2025)*

1. It is a pleasure to be with you here in Bern. I thank our Swiss hosts for their warm hospitality and ECAC for convening this valued forum.
2. Meetings like this allow Europe's aviation leadership to speak frankly, share lessons learned, and help set the tone for global cooperation.
3. The work happening in this region shows what can be achieved when institutions align around shared goals and steady implementation.
4. I also want to highlight the progress we have achieved through the strengthened coordination and cooperation between ECAC and ICAO's EUR/NAT Regional Office in Paris, over the past three years.
5. This cooperation has delivered important outcomes, including several joint regional events and initiatives.
6. In addition, the ICAO Paris Office has deepened its collaboration with the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), and EUROCONTROL, reinforcing global objectives, enhancing our ability to address regional challenges and promoting European best practices throughout the EUR/NAT area and beyond.
7. The progress achieved here in Europe can provide examples for other regions worldwide.

8. Building on this success, I encourage us to continue this close collaboration as we are addressing challenges that are growing in both number and complexity.
9. It is in this same spirit of collaboration that I will structure my remarks today around three themes: the ICAO Strategic and Business Plans, the upcoming Assembly, and ICAO's transformation.
10. Our long-term Strategic Plan, looking out to 2050, captures a simple vision: a safe, secure and sustainable international civil aviation system that connects the world for the benefit of all nations and people.
11. It is guided by three shared aspirations that you know well: zero fatalities from accidents and unlawful interference incidents; net-zero carbon emissions from international aviation by 2050; and seamless accessible global connectivity for all. These are ambitious aims, but they are not abstract.
12. Traffic growth makes these choices urgent. By mid-century the system will need to serve roughly three times today's number of passengers, and air cargo is expected to grow by more than double.
13. If we wait for the 2030s to build the foundations, we will be too late. The groundwork must happen now, in the next three years, while we still have room to shape outcomes rather than chase after them.
14. What does that foundation look like in practice? First, it means guarding the integrity of our safety and security systems as complexity increases.
15. Threats have evolved. Cyber risks to critical aviation infrastructure are now persistent and sophisticated. Radio-frequency interference affecting satellite-based navigation has moved from theory to operational reality in some regions.
16. This region has been proactive through EASA and EUROCONTROL. ICAO's role is to provide harmonized global frameworks, guidance and peer support so that solutions scale beyond national borders, and support the global system.
17. In the coming triennium, we will prioritize work that strengthens cybersecurity governance and builds resilience to GNSS radio frequency interference, including practical guidance and information sharing so that States can detect, respond and mitigate.

18. Second, the clean-energy transition must accelerate. Europe has moved early on sustainable aviation fuels and supportive policies, and industry is signaling strong intent.
19. The challenge is scale and global reach. That is why we are operationalizing the Finvest Hub at ICAO to connect viable projects in developing regions with climate finance and private capital.
20. This is a practical step to ensure that *No Country is Left Behind* as the sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) market grows and that decarbonization becomes a global opportunity, not a regional privilege.
21. I am pleased to note that Robert Boyd has joined ICAO, after broad experience in the financial and aviation sectors, to lead this work as the Chief of the Finvest Hub. With your engagement, Finvest will become a platform where policy intent meets bankable projects and measurable emissions reductions.
22. Third, we must safely integrate new entrants. Drones and advanced air mobility are already here. They can enhance connectivity, inspection, and emergency response, but if they are not integrated with care, they can add risk and fragmentation.
23. Europe's initiatives are instructive and constructive; ICAO will continue to convene and codify best practice so that frameworks remain interoperable and safety-first.
24. These three areas—cybersecurity and GNSS resilience, SAF scale-up, and integration of drones and advanced air mobility (AAM)—are Priority Areas in the ICAO Business Plan for 2026–2028.
25. They sit alongside the continuing workstreams on oversight, facilitation, crisis preparedness, and capacity building that keep the global system safe, secure, and sustainable. Together they are the near-term foundation for our 2050 aspirations.
26. Identifying the right priorities is only the first step. We must also match them with resources. Our triennial budget is the bridge between the Business Plan and results for States. It shows, in practical terms, what we choose to advance first.

27. I must be candid. ICAO has lived with zero-nominal growth for several triennia, even as expectations have risen. Inflation has compounded the pressure. Capability losses are real. Technical assistance has been delayed. Some panels have slowed progress for lack of expert resourcing.
28. In a world of increasing traffic and increasing complexity, standing still is effectively staying behind.
29. Looking to 2026–2028, our analysis shows an internal funding gap of CAD 90 million between a zero-nominal growth scenario and the level of resources required to deliver the priorities in the Business Plan. That gap is real.
30. It translates into fewer audits and assistance missions, reduced capacity to support States on cybersecurity and new navigation risks, slower progress on environmental standards and reporting, and less implementation support provided to States to reduce disparities in implementation of ICAO SARPs.
31. In parallel, ICAO is launching a Consolidated Appeal to the international community for the funding gap. This is outward-facing. It is designed to fund high-priority programmes and targeted implementation support where needs are most important and urgent.
32. It includes resources to help States deploy secure and interoperable digital border systems, to strengthen oversight capacity where gaps persist, and to connect climate finance to aviation decarbonization through the Finvest Hub. If we succeed, the return on investment will be felt beyond aviation, in trade, travel, tourism, and sustainable development.
33. I would offer a simple way to think about this: plans express our ambitions; budgets enable achieving our priorities. If a commitment is not resourced with people, time and funding, it cannot be delivered at the necessary scale.
34. The integration of planning with budget processes at ICAO is made with this in mind. Priorities and resources must be set together. When they are, the leverage is significant.
35. ICAO can do what no single State can do alone: set global standards, assess implementation, and deliver capacity-building that spreads expertise efficiently and effectively.

36. States can then implement enhanced services and upgraded infrastructure with confidence that frameworks will be recognized across borders. Industry can invest with clearer signals, lowering risk and speeding adoption.
37. This is why we call the budget a bridge. It connects words to results. It tells our people where to focus. And it is the most tangible statement of what we value together.
38. The Assembly in Montreal will be decisive for how quickly we move from plans to outcomes. The Council will seek approval of the budget based on the endorsed Business Plan and approved Strategic Plan for 2026–2050, so that the long-term direction is truly shared by all States. That decision will also enable regions to calibrate their own paths and how we align global resources.
39. On safety and security, we will invite States to recommit to the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme and the Universal Security Audit Programme and to use the results to target improvements in States implementation. We will also seek more structured cooperation on cybersecurity and crisis preparedness so that lessons travel fast and capacity can be surged during shocks.
40. On sustainability, we will reaffirm the Long-Term Global Aspirational Goal of net-zero emissions by 2050 for international aviation, we will advance the framework for cleaner aviation energies and the upscaling of SAF, and we will reaffirm the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) as the only global market-based measure for international aviation CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.
41. We will also continue technical work on noise, local air quality, and adaptation, all of which have real impacts on public acceptance and airport operations.
42. Across the agenda the strategic goal of *No Country Left Behind* will remain constant. A global network can only be as strong as its least-supported nodes.
43. For Europe, the Assembly will be a chance to highlight the impact of regional cooperation and to socialize approaches that work. The experience of EASA and EUROCONTROL in cybersecurity cooperation, GNSS interference management, and the integration of new entrants is valuable to the global community.

44. Your leadership can help ensure that frameworks developed here are translated into benefits elsewhere, rather than splintering into incompatible models.
45. Our expectation is not that every question will be settled in Montreal. It is that we will emerge with a clear direction, a shared understanding of the near-term priorities, and the resource commitments to match them. That combination is what moves the needle in the real world.
46. Let me turn to ICAO itself. Three years ago, we set out to become more efficient and effective, more transparent, and more responsive. We are now in the final year of that transformation journey.
47. Twenty of thirty-seven projects have been completed, with the remainder on track. We have modernized our core management systems to integrate finance, human resources, project management and procurement, which has already improved the speed and reliability of our internal processes and the quality of the information we use to make decisions.
48. We have strengthened conflict-resolution mechanisms, introduced staff counsel services, and appointed our first full-time Ombudsperson. We have invested in leadership and workforce development through learning programmes. We have also advanced gender equality initiatives designed to broaden talent pipelines across the sector. Additionally, we have sharpened our innovation strategy so that emerging technical work is prioritized and better coordinated. These are not ends in themselves. They are the operating upgrades that allow us to serve States better.
49. And we should be candid about the gaps. Resource constraints are still the main brake on implementation. Demand for ICAO support is growing faster than our capacity in some technical areas.
50. Recruiting and retaining the right and best expertise remains difficult in a highly competitive labor market. Some of our digital platforms need further investment to reach their full potential. Our process management and project portfolio management still need enhancements.
51. These are solvable issues, but they require a realistic budget and sustained support from Member States and partners. With that support, we can complete the transformation and deliver more value for every dollar and every hour invested by this community.

52. Colleagues, the next triennium will set the tone for the next quarter century. The foundations we lay now will determine whether we can keep the skies safe as traffic grows, whether we can protect the system from evolving threats, whether we can decarbonize at the pace the planet and human life requires, and whether the benefits of air connectivity remain widely shared.
53. Our Strategic Plan gives us the direction. Our Business Plan converts that direction into near-term work. Our budget is the bridge that carries those priorities into results. The Consolidated Appeal is how we extend those results into regions and sectors that need them most.
54. The Assembly is the moment to lock in this alignment. And ICAO's transformation is how we will deliver with greater speed, transparency, and impact.
55. This region has shown what can be accomplished, when institutions work together with discipline and a long view.
56. I hope we can carry that spirit to Montreal and into the everyday work of the next triennium. If we do, we will leave a safer, secure, cleaner, and more connected system for the next generation.
57. I thank you for your leadership and your partnership, and I look forward to our discussion.
58. Thank you.