



**Opening Remarks by the
Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar
To the Fourth Civil Aviation Legal Advisers Forum (CALAF/4)**

1. It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the Fourth Civil Aviation Legal Advisers Forum.
2. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to our host Government and to the Civil Aviation Authority of the Bahamas for their warm hospitality.
3. I also extend my gratitude to all participants who have joined us from across ICAO's regions. Your presence here today reflects the strength, diversity, and commitment of our global legal community.
4. Since its inception, CALAF has established itself as the premier global platform for civil aviation legal advisers. It provides a unique forum for the exchange of expertise, for addressing emerging legal challenges, and for shaping the future of international air law. Each edition has built upon the last, and today, CALAF/4 marks an important milestone on that journey.
5. The 42nd Session of the ICAO Assembly demonstrated an unprecedented level of global engagement and unity, with an overwhelming number of resolutions adopted by consensus.
6. These decisions provide a clear and ambitious roadmap for the future of our sector, and they carry important implications for our legal frameworks.
7. The Assembly reaffirmed that a strong, coherent, and adaptable legal system is essential to achieving ICAO's objectives. Whether in the areas of environmental protection, aviation safety and security, facilitation, or the integration of new technologies, legal advisers play a central role in translating global commitments into effective national implementation.
8. In this regard, your work is more critical than ever.

9. As we look to the future, ICAO's Strategic Plan provides a comprehensive vision for international aviation. It is guided by a clear objective: to ensure a safe, secure, and sustainable aviation system that connects the world for the benefit of all nations and peoples.
10. This vision is underpinned by three global aspirations: achieving zero fatalities in aviation operations, reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, and ensuring that aviation remains an inclusive and accessible driver of socio-economic development, with no country left behind.
11. These aspirations cannot be realized without a robust and forward-looking legal framework.
12. One of ICAO's strategic goals is to ensure that the international legal regime governing civil aviation continues to evolve in response to new and emerging challenges. The rules-based system established by the Chicago Convention has served us remarkably well for over eight decades. However, it must continue to adapt to remain effective, relevant, and capable of supporting innovation.
13. Today, we are witnessing rapid technological developments that are transforming aviation. Artificial intelligence, unmanned aircraft systems, and the digitalization of processes are opening new opportunities, while also raising complex legal and regulatory questions.
14. At the same time, we face urgent global priorities, including the need to address climate change and to strengthen aviation security in an increasingly complex environment.
15. These developments require careful legal consideration:

First, they call for frameworks that enable innovation while safeguarding safety, security, fundamental rights, and international cooperation.

Second, we must also ensure that the benefits of aviation are shared equitably. The principle of leaving no country behind remains central to ICAO's vision, and legal harmonization is a key enabler of that goal.
16. Encouraging progress has been made in strengthening the international air law regime. The continued growth in ratifications of ICAO treaties demonstrates the commitment of States to a unified legal framework.

17. Key instruments, including the Montreal Convention of 1999, the Beijing instruments of 2010, and the Montréal Protocol of 2014, are essential pillars of this system.
18. Nevertheless, further efforts are needed to achieve universal adoption and effective implementation. I encourage all States to continue their work in this regard.
19. In parallel, ICAO has been advancing its legal work in other important areas, including the modernization of dispute settlement mechanisms and the development of guidance to support States in addressing emerging legal issues.
20. Another critical dimension of our work is developing the workforce. The Assembly has highlighted the importance of strengthening legal expertise within civil aviation administrations. Competent and well-trained legal advisers are indispensable to the effective functioning of the aviation system.
21. Through initiatives such as the Next Generation of Aviation Professionals Programme, ICAO is supporting States in developing the skills and capacities needed for the future. This includes promoting diversity and gender equality within the aviation legal community, where we are encouraged to see increasing representation of women in leadership roles.
22. Over the coming days, you will address a range of key topics that are central to the future of international aviation law. These include the legal implications of emerging technologies, the evolving landscape of data protection and facilitation, environmental sustainability, and the continued development of legal capacity.
23. I encourage you to engage actively, to share your experiences, and to work collaboratively in identifying practical solutions. Your discussions here have the potential to shape global approaches and to contribute directly to ICAO's work programme.
24. Let me also emphasize the importance of moving from policy to implementation. The success of our collective efforts will ultimately be measured not only by the frameworks we develop, but by the tangible results we achieve. This requires sustained commitment, strong partnerships, and alignment between international standards and national practices.

25. In this context, CALAF represents an important opportunity to advance our shared objectives and to strengthen the global legal framework that underpins international civil aviation.
26. In closing, I am confident that the expertise and dedication present in this room will lead to meaningful and productive discussions.
27. Your contributions are essential to ensuring that international aviation continues to evolve in a manner that is safe, secure, sustainable, and inclusive.
28. I wish you every success in your deliberations, and I thank you for your continued commitment to ICAO and to the advancement of international air law.
29. Thank you.