



Opening Remarks by the Secretary General
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar
to the NACC DGCA
1 June 2026

1. I am honoured to open this meeting of the Directors General of Civil Aviation of the North American, Central American, and Caribbean region.
2. On behalf of the International Civil Aviation Organization, I warmly welcome every State, partner, and industry representative present today.
3. I want to extend a special greeting to the new Directors General to join this meeting, namely Claudius Lestrade of Dominica, Sylvain Lefoyer of the French Antilles, Alva Browne of Grenada, Hantz Celestin of Haiti, Belkis E. Escobar of Honduras, Nichole Morgan of Jamaica, and Emilio Avendaño García of México.
4. This is our first gathering since the ICAO Assembly in October, where 192 States came together in unprecedented participation and consensus to adopt 32 new Resolutions.
5. These Resolutions set a shared ambition for air transport for all by 2050, with zero fatalities and net-zero carbon emissions.
6. The ICAO Strategic Plan for 2026 through 2050 provides clear direction.
7. It sets out how to achieve our aims, by ensuring the safety and security of every flight, strong environmental sustainability, accessible air connections, regional cooperation to ensure no country is left behind, adaptable legal agreements, and widespread benefits from aviation's growth.
8. Working together will place these six goals within our reach.

9. With the first year of the 25-year plan now underway, this region is well positioned to make strong contributions to global momentum from the outset, and to shape it.
10. ICAO's Business Plan for 2026 to 2028 structures our next steps as we move forward, and with results-based management and new oversight dashboards, ICAO now has reliable tools to track progress and focus resources where it matters most.
11. This will also enable us to better identify any issues early on, encouraging and enabling transparent teamwork.
12. And as we move forward, we will build on your successes.
13. States in this region are developing and improving systems for ongoing oversight of aviation safety, security, and environmental issues.
14. The North American, Central American, and Caribbean Safety and Air Navigation Plan, the Regional Safety Oversight Organization, and the trend of systematic improvements after audits all support this progress.
15. The expansion of the sharing and use of data and experience is also key, especially through the Regional Aviation Safety Group – Pan America and the Regional Aviation Security and Facilitation Group.
16. I am delighted to see the membership and expertise of those groups actively expanding.
17. You are also enhancing environmental protection.
18. NACC States are raising sustainability standards, responding to recommendations, and strengthening the systems and value chains that will drive the green transition.
19. This is essential as the number of air services expand, which you are preparing for through significant upgrades to air navigation services.

20. Through initiatives like system-wide data repositories and Free Route Airspace, these will additionally enhance capacity, efficiency, and safety.
21. In tandem, the Aviation System Block Upgrades framework and the Global and Regional Air Navigation Plans are guiding collaboration with airlines and Air Navigation Service Providers.
22. And the implementation of the Caribbean Air Navigation Services Network in 2027, along with infrastructure upgrades to the Mejora de las Enlaces de Voz Aeronáutica III network, will further advance the region.
23. NACC States are preparing systems and staff for these changes, and working together to ensure no country is left behind.
24. Regional initiatives like the Sistema Regional de Cooperación para la Vigilancia de la Seguridad Operacional, or SRVSOP, are shaping a common foundation that supports steady progress for all.
25. The arrival of targeted expertise, such as the aerodromes and ground aids specialist funded by the United Kingdom and Canada, is also accelerating technical capacity where it is most needed.
26. At the same time, the region is advancing the harmonization of regulations and certification, creating a more consistent and reliable aviation system.
27. This work is reinforced by broader collaborations: projects with the European Union Aviation Safety Agency and the Agencia Centroamericana de Seguridad Aeronáutica, with support from the Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana, are aligning operational and licensing standards across borders.
28. Capacity for accident investigation also continues to grow, powered by regional training and shared resources provided through the Grupo Regional de Investigación de Accidentes de Aviación and the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority.
29. Meanwhile, ICAO continues to build the legal frameworks for collaboration, and to encourage full participation at the global level.

30. We support States' work under Article 83 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, including agreement registration and the maintenance of up-to-date national focal points through the Website of Aeronautical Agreements and Arrangements, or WAGMAR.
31. The opportunities we are offering at the Civil Aviation Legal Advisers Forum, with this year's session just recently concluded last week in the Bahamas, and regional workshops will also strengthen shared understanding.
32. I also want to highlight that the 2026 regional workshop on airport and air navigation service user fees offers a valuable forum for practical experience and solutions in that area, which is a priority for this region.
33. More broadly speaking, ICAO's regional partnerships on matters related to economic policy and growth continue to strengthen.
34. We are proud of our work with the Caribbean Community, the Latin American Civil Aviation Commission, the Association of Caribbean States, Caribbean Aviation Meetup, or CARIBAVIA, the Latin American and Caribbean Air Transport Association, IATA, and Airports Council International. Among other priorities, we are expanding the collection and use of air transport data, which is fundamental to our ability to strategize for future growth.
35. In this regard, a major opportunity lies ahead.
36. The Seventh Worldwide Air Transport Conference will be hosted at ICAO Headquarters in Montréal from 16 to 20 November 2026.
37. The success of these talks and the international frameworks they will define depends in large part on how well regional perspectives are represented.
38. I want to encourage the States in this region to begin preparing your national and shared positions for these talks.
39. This is nothing less than an opportunity to shape the next decade of global economic policy for air transport.

40. The Conference may moreover coincide with an extraordinary session of the ICAO Assembly.
41. The Chicago Convention amendments to expand the ICAO Council and Air Navigation Commission will soon be ratified by enough States, which will trigger the need for new elections during an ICAO Assembly.
42. The convening of this Session for November will be contingent on ICAO receiving all 128 ratifications by a tentative cut-off date of 31 July 2026. States are therefore urged to ratify both Protocols as soon as possible. It is noted that 14 of the 22 NACC States have already ratified both Protocols.
43. Taken together, November must be seen as a crucial month for the NACC Region to advocate for its priorities and needs.
44. In recognizing these pivotal opportunities, and the crucial importance of all the work highlighted today, I want to stress that ICAO continues to make its own transformation a priority.
45. We have reached major milestones in upgrading systems, talent, information security, and data tools, so that States in this region are better supported than ever.
46. ICAO's Continuous Organizational Improvement Programme is focused on ensuring you have exactly what you need to prepare, participate and lead at the global level—and through this programme, we will ensure that our support only becomes stronger and more closely aligned to your needs and priorities in the years ahead.
47. In this regard, we are happy to share with you the experience and knowledge we gained from our Transformational Objective. I would like to invite States who embark on a similar journey to reach out to us, so that we may impart this knowledge.
48. Building on all of this momentum, I invite you to focus on three priorities here and in the coming months.

49. In the first instance, it is crucial that you continue to strengthen regional cooperation and coordination on safety, security, and environmental matters.
50. Secondly, I urge you to ensure the prompt sharing of information, the active engagement of technical specialists, and careful maintenance of national records, including the WAGMAR. This will maximize the value of the tools and expertise that are available.
51. And finally, as you prepare for the Seventh Worldwide Air Transport Conference and the next ICAO Assembly, I strongly encourage you to work together to develop a shared position that accelerates progress towards the ICAO strategic vision in this region.
52. Your leadership on these priorities will bring the benefits of safe, secure, and sustainable aviation closer to every citizen, in every State.