Opening Remarks by the ICAO Secretary General

Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar

at the 2026 Aviation Security Week

Astana, Kazakhstan 20 October 2026

1. *Qaiyrly tan* — good morning.

2. It is a great pleasure to open ICAO Security Week 2026 here in Astana.

3. On behalf of ICAO, I wish to thank the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Transport, the Civil Aviation Committee under the leadership of its Chair, Ms. Saltanat Tompiyeva,and the Aviation Administration of Kazakhstan for hosting us so generously.

4. Thank you for the care you have put into every part of this event.

5. ICAO and its Member States have built a strong and resilient global framework for aviation security with the Standards of Annex 17 – *Aviation Security* and the associated guidance material issued alongside every Annex amendment.

6. These are supported by the Global Aviation Security Plan, which gives us shared priorities, and the Universal Security Audit Programme, which verifies how this framework is being put into practice.

7. Now we must go further.

8. The ICAO Strategic Plan and Vision received unanimous support at the ICAO Assembly last year.

9. The ICAO Vision is air transport for all by 2050, with zero fatalities and net-zero carbon emissions.

10. We are working to eliminate fatalities from unlawful interference entirely.

11. 2026 is the first year of our plan to achieve this vision, and you will play a key role in accelerating the momentum from the strong foundation we have.

12. We must eliminate all acts of unlawful interference in civil aviation and the fatalities they can cause. We will strengthen every layer of security and share intelligence among other critical information, ensuring States work together to protect every flight.

13. We must modernize aviation security with optimized processes, agile frameworks, innovation, and AI to stay ahead of evolving threats.

14. We must invest in workforce development, so security personnel are prepared for new challenges.

15. We must strengthen our answer to cyberthreats because digital resilience is essential for safe operations.

16. We must address risks from conflict zones with enhanced information sharing and practical risk assessments to respond quickly to emerging dangers.

17. And we must further secure cargo and mail for supply chains to be globally strengthened throughout the system.

18. Threat actors are adaptive. They learn, they innovate, and they exploit new technologies faster thanregulation has traditionally moved.

19. Unmanned aircraft are widely available. Digitalization connects every part of our operations, and with it, every vulnerability. Supply chains grow more complex every day.

20. Airspace that was routine yesterday can become dangerous overnight. If we only respond to what has already happened, we will always be one step behind.

21. That is why not only successful attacks but also attempted attacks can have a heavy impact, where measures, rerouted flights, delays, and so forth can affect not only passengers but business.

22. That is why forward-looking security and resilience are important. It's about protecting and preserving the confidence and continuity on which the wider economic contribution of aviation depends on.

23. So the ambition for this week, and for the years ahead, is to move from reacting to anticipating.

24. We must anticipate how aviation security must evolve, and how aviation security can be modernized.

25. That means foresight. It means risk-based decisions informed by intelligence, where we understand not only the threat, but also the vulnerabilities and consequences that together determine the risk. And it means working together earlier and sharing information faster: between States, within States, and with industry.

26. The end result is delivery of security that is seamless, effective and sustainable, supporting a dynamic and fast-growing industry.

27. The programme before you has been built around exactly that ambition.

28. First, we will begin by taking stock of the global state of security in aviation. We will ask how findings under the Universal Security Audit Programme can become lasting continuous improvement, even long after the auditors have left. And we will look honestly at how the Global Aviation Security Plan is being put into practice on the road to its Aspirational Goal, and areas where engagement with the Plan needs strengthening.

29. Second, we will turn to the areas where risk is moving fastest. Air cargo and mail, where one chain depends on many actors. Cybersecurity, which ignores the boundaries between air navigation, airports, airlines and regulators. And conflict zones, where States and operators must make sound decisions with little time and incomplete information. We will also face a practical reality: modernization means little if it cannot be sustained with the resources actually available.

30. Third, we will end where security always ends: with people. Behind every screening decision and every access check is a person whose judgement, vigilance and commitment make the system work.

31. Alongside the main sessions, side events will look at countering the misuse of unmanned aircraft, together with our United Nations partners United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate; at how human factors and the perspective of women make security stronger; and at the new ICAO Next General of Aviation Professionals Aviation Security Strategy, so that the next generation of professionals is ready for the challenges they will face.

32. This is a week for you, the people who deliver security every day. I encourage you to be candid. Share what has worked and, just as importantly, what has not. The most useful lessons are often the ones we are least comfortable telling.

33. What we learn here matters beyond this room. In 2027, ICAO will convene the third High-Level Conference on Aviation Security. The ideas that emerge from Astana can enrich the global conversation as we prepare for it, and on Thursday we will bring them together as the Messages from Astana.

34. Let me also thank our keynote speakers, moderators and panellists, our partners from industry and the United Nations family, and the ICAO and Kazakh teams who have worked side by side to prepare this week.

35. Security in aviation has never been the work of one State or one organization. It is a shared responsibility and a shared achievement. The challenges that we face today are increasingly complex, interconnected and constantly evolving. No one State can address them alone.

36. Only through international cooperation and collective resolve can we effectively anticipate and counter emerging threats.

37. Let us use these three days to reinforce these partnerships and make sure that, in the years ahead, we are not only keeping pace with the threat, but staying ahead of it.

38. I wish you a productive and inspiring week.

Rakhmet. Thank you.