



**Keynote by the
Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar
to the World Overflight Risk Conference**

21 April 2026, Malta

1. Even in times of uncertainty, aviation continues to connect people, cultures, and economies worldwide.
2. It is now time to strengthen and safeguard this system – ensuring that it remains resilient and ready for the demands ahead.
3. I am honoured to deliver the keynote address at this 2026 World Overflight Risk Conference. I am also encouraged by your participation in these talks, and by Malta’s foresight in convening this Conference.
4. We have a significant opportunity before us. Over the next two days, leaders from every region will contribute their expertise and energy.
5. Together, we will explore the operational realities and the global framework from new perspectives.
6. Recent events have brought new challenges to airspace management.
7. In the opening days of the most recent crisis in the Middle East, more than a thousand flights each day were affected here in Europe alone.
8. Aviation rose to the challenge, adjusting routings and maintaining safe and continuous operations. We rerouted critical air traffic flows linking the world’s major population centres.
9. This commitment to resilience, adaptation, safety and security, is the foundation of our industry.

10. We must now reach beyond the boundaries of aviation as we have known it.
11. Innovations such as long-range systems, unmanned aircraft, and advanced air defence are among the technologies creating a new environment.
12. Today I want to focus on solutions, not problems. We must build on our success.
13. I want to highlight the importance of the ICAO Safer Skies initiative in showing us the way forward.
14. I also want to thank everyone who contributed to ICAO's constructive meetings in November last year on radio-frequency interference affecting Global Navigation Satellite Systems, and in January on civil-military cooperation.
15. Let me also briefly share that Poland will host ICAO talks on counter-unmanned aircraft systems this July.
16. Together, we have built a firm foundation for action on overflight risks.
17. This is reflected in the unanimous adoption of ICAO Assembly Resolution A42-4 on Addressing risks to civil aviation arising from conflict zones.
18. This Resolution re-affirmed the world's shared commitment to the safety of civil aviation.
19. It also built on Article 3 bis of the Chicago Convention, which prohibits the use of weapons against civil aircraft in flight in the clearest terms.
20. Resolution A42-4 calls on us to assess airspace risk continuously, to act where necessary, and to share information swiftly with air navigation service providers and operators.
21. Operators are asked to make their own assessments and implement effective measures. Civil-military coordination, especially where new technologies and civil aviation meet, is a shared responsibility.
22. This Resolution recognizes the complexity before us.
23. So too does the strength of ICAO guidance in this area.
24. Three ICAO documents provide the blueprint for resilience:

These are the Manual Concerning Safety Measures relating to Military Activities, the Risk Assessment Manual for Civil Aircraft Operations Over or Near Conflict Zones, and the Manual on Civil and Military Cooperation in Air Traffic Management.

25. In the year ahead, we will enrich these tools further, guided by your expertise.
26. Your efforts to improve and implement ICAO guidance will drive progress towards ICAO's strategic vision for international civil aviation.
27. As promulgated in ICAO's Strategic Plan, we envision air transport for all by 2050, with zero fatalities and net-zero carbon emissions.
28. In addition to protecting human life, this strategy also shapes our shared efforts to build an air transport system that can withstand crisis, including by anticipating crisis.
29. In this regard, ICAO is finalizing a unified Global Crisis Management Framework.
30. This framework brings together health, facilitation, security, disaster risk reduction, and airspace management, ensuring that ICAO stands ready for every challenge.
31. This global approach is strengthened by efforts such as the Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation, the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response in Aviation, and the actions recommended by the Fourteenth ICAO Air Navigation Conference.
32. Progress is also being achieved through the harmonized Regional Air Traffic Management Contingency Management Frameworks.
33. These frameworks guarantee that whenever a region encounters difficulty, the response is aligned, consistent, and swift.
34. Within this framework, Contingency Coordination Teams are empowered to act decisively, and we have seen successful examples of effective coordination in recent global events.
35. Drawing upon risk assessment, collaboration, civil-military partnerships, and flexibility, these teams ensure safe and resilient skies.

36. Safety and resilience are promised by our global architecture. There is much more we can do to support this architecture, and build on it.

37. In conclusion, I want to take this opportunity to invite you to support three high priorities:

First, I urge you to share information promptly and openly. Timely information is the cornerstone of safe decision-making. It is essential to building trust and saving lives.

Secondly, I encourage you to strengthen ICAO's work on conflict zones by helping us to enhance guidance, strengthen coordination, and build capacity. This is a priority you can work on right here in Malta, and it is a priority that requires long-term commitment.

Thirdly, I call on you to implement ICAO frameworks through your national plans. This includes equipping and training your teams, and strengthening the connections between your civil and military stakeholders.

38. I look forward to the work ahead, and I am confident that this Conference will be remembered for its significant contributions to safer skies for all.