



**Opening remarks by
the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the Fourteenth Air Navigation Conference**

(ICAO Assembly Hall, 27 August 2024)

*Distinguished Delegates,
Honorable Deputy Minister of Transport of Canada Arun Thangaraj,
Colleagues and Friends,*

On behalf of the Council and the Secretary General of the International Civil Aviation Organization, I warmly welcome you to the Fourteenth Air Navigation Conference, under the theme of "Performance Improvement Driving Sustainability."

This Conference will be crucial in defining the next steps for the improvement of global air navigation systems.

It is particularly significant as this year we celebrate the 80th anniversary of the adoption of the Chicago Convention.

Eight decades ago, in the midst of a global conflict, nations united to transform aviation into a catalyst for peace and social and economic development. Today the challenges before international civil aviation are still great, yet we can draw inspiration from our past in order to meet them and successfully pursue new achievements.

This is why the Organization is focussing its 80th Anniversary celebration not solely on the achievements of the last eight decades, but, in my view more importantly, on how ICAO will be able to continue to support air transport development in the coming decades. This is the reason why the Council is reviewing and will soon approve the ICAO Strategic Plan 2026-2050.

In particular, we know that global air traffic has rebounded to pre-pandemic levels and is projected to more than double in the next two decades. This growth requires us to make immense efforts to meet our environmental responsibilities towards global net zero carbon emissions by 2050, the Long Term Aspirational Goal.

Flight Operations will have to contribute substantially to this Goal. Secretary General Salazar will elaborate on our strategic approach to sustainable aviation growth in his address later today.

We must also safely integrate rapid technological advancements in aircraft design, autonomous flight, and air traffic management systems while fortifying our aviation infrastructure against

increasing cyber threats. While these challenges are not entirely new, they demand renewed focus and innovative solutions.

The 41st ICAO Assembly emphasized critical priority areas: the post-pandemic recovery and long-term sustainability of air transport, CO₂ emissions reduction as I just mentioned, and enhancing aviation system resilience while maintaining safety.

Your presence here reaffirms our collective commitment to addressing these priorities with strategic intent and renewed vigour.

This Conference will refocus our efforts on existing and new technical initiatives that align with ICAO's three aspirational goals foreseen in our Strategic Plan:

Zero fatalities in international aviation from accidents and acts of unlawful interference;

Net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 for international aviation operations; and

Aviation serving as an integral part of a thriving, connected, accessible, inclusive, and affordable transport system for people and goods, contributing to socio-economic development, while ensuring no country is left behind.

Again, the Secretary General will provide more detail on how these goals shape our long-term strategy.

At this Conference, you will have an opportunity to review the outcomes of our Organization-wide reprioritization exercise. This exercise encompasses all activities in our current business plan and those stemming from the 41st Session of the Assembly. You will also discuss the priority focus areas set by the Council, which are designed to guide our organization's efforts during the current triennium.

Looking further ahead, we will explore ways to effectively align our global plans. Our aim is to ensure these plans complement each other in addressing both current and emerging challenges while minimizing overlapping initiatives and maximizing synergies. This alignment is crucial for the coherent evolution of our global aviation system.

As far as long-term strategic planning is concerned and in preparation for the 42nd Session of the Assembly in 2025, this Conference provides a valuable opportunity to discuss potential adjustments to the focus of the Technical Commission of the ICAO Assembly.

In this latter regard, I wish to underline that the Council is committed to enhancing the efficiency of ICAO Assemblies and intends to take better stock of conclusions of High-Level Conferences, as this 14th Air Navigation Conference, consolidating them into Assembly Resolutions minimizing further discussions as much as possible.

I am sure that you will consider this aspect during your deliberations in the two weeks and, more importantly, in preparation of the 42nd ICAO Assembly in just over a year from now.

This Conference in particular builds on insights gathered from last year's Air Navigation World events in Montreal and Singapore. These events highlighted the aviation community's expectations and priorities, which will inform our discussions here.

Several focus areas will guide our deliberations. We will address the safe and timely introduction of new aircraft technologies, assessing their implications for operations and infrastructure in aerodrome operations and air traffic management.

The recent increase in GNSS interference is a significant concern. It impacts the safety and continuity of civil aviation operations. While I cannot refrain from condemning GNSS interference, as it endangers civil aviation safety, we must acknowledge that we need to reassess the adequacy of our current policies, standards, and guidance material, and develop effective mitigation measures.

Enhancing air navigation efficiency to support our environmental targets outlined in the Long-Term Aspirational Goal (LTAG) is crucial. We welcome new initiatives that promise broader, more consistent performance improvements.

A key issue on our agenda is the transition from legacy systems to new technologies.

In particular, we will focus on modernizing our flight planning mechanisms. This includes moving from our current system to the new approach of Flight and Flow Information for a Collaborative Environment, or FF-ICE for short. This represents a critical step in modernizing our approach and enhancing global air navigation efficiency.

We will also explore ways to improve connectivity between aircraft and ground-based systems. This is essential to facilitate the extensive information exchange required for implementing advanced air traffic management concepts, such as trajectory-based operations.

We acknowledge challenges, including optimal use of a limited frequency spectrum, ensuring seamless cross-border interoperability, and mitigating cyber threats.

Your feedback on the next editions of the Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP) and Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP) is also crucial. The proposed goals and targets for the next GASP are meant to serve as catalysts to address global safety issues.

The GANP update reflects alignment with the priority areas recognized by the 41st Assembly and includes improvements on the conceptual roadmap, the performance framework, and the Aviation System Block Upgrade (ASBU) framework.

I believe that this Conference is a critical bridge between the 41st and 42nd Sessions of the Assembly. It marks a significant milestone in our journey toward a more sustainable, safe, and efficient global air navigation system.

Let us embark on these two weeks of deliberations with a profound sense of responsibility and optimism. The outcomes of our discussions will shape ICAO's work programme and set the stage for impactful decisions at the 42nd Assembly.

I would like to close by thanking you for your commitment and active participation. And I would urge you to make these discussions count – let us forge a path forward with resolve and vision.

It is now my honour to declare the Fourteenth Air Navigation Conference open and I would like to invite the President of the Air Navigation Commission, Mr. Junrong Liang, to address the Conference and elaborate further on its agenda. I wish you very successful deliberations.

Thank you.