



**Opening Remarks by
the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the 42nd Session of the ICAO Assembly**

(Montréal, Canada, 23 September 2025)

Dear Delegates,

It is my great honour and privilege to declare open the 42nd Session of the ICAO Assembly.

On behalf of the ICAO Council and of the ICAO Secretary General, Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar, I wish to welcome the many Honourable Ministers, dignitaries, Directors General of Civil Aviation, and indeed all delegates participating in this Assembly.

I also wish to extend a very warm welcome to our three distinguished guests:

The Honourable Steven MacKinnon, Minister of Transport of the Government of Canada;

Mr. Christopher Skeete, Minister of International Relations and La Francophonie du Québec;

and Mme. Ericka Alneus, Member of the Executive Committee of the City of Montréal;

It is also a huge pleasure to welcome here today the representatives of United Nations sister organizations, regional aviation Commissions, aviation industry organizations, non-governmental organizations, and of many other entities from around the world with a shared interest in our sector.

We gather here at a decisive moment, a moment that will define our flight path for the future.

I wish to begin by addressing the State of Global Aviation, as air transport returns to its long-term growth trend. Traffic levels have returned to those of 2019 in fewer than three years after restrictions began to ease.

That recovery is a clear achievement. It shows the resilience of our sector. It shows the resilience of the demand for air connectivity.

It also foreshadows the urgency of the decisions before us.

We have the responsibility of setting the direction of international civil aviation through to the middle of this century, and beyond.

The world is watching, and future generations will live with the legacy we create here.

As you have seen, in the coming days, we will be making pivotal contributions to aviation's remarkable story.

Slightly over 40 years after the signing of the Chicago Convention - in 1985 - aviation passed the one billion annual passenger milestone. But it would take less than two decades for that figure to double again, with two billion passengers transported in 2004.

Two decades later, this number more than doubled again, to 4.6 billion.

And by 2050 — we forecast a potential 12.4 billion passengers each year. Air cargo will grow as well, from 265 billion freight tonne-kilometres today, to the 638 billion by mid-century.

These statistics reflect more businesses reaching global markets, and more economic opportunities reaching remote communities.

They reflect more families and friends being reunited across continents, and more opportunities for future generations to venture out into the world.

They reflect the fact that connections are lifelines and that aviation is a crucial enabler of socio-economic development.

We have long known this.

The Chicago Convention has mandated us to continue leveraging aviation as a catalyst for peace and prosperity among nations and peoples.

The Convention highlights that agreement among nations is equally key to developing aviation, in a safe and orderly manner. It also calls for air transport services established on the basis of equality of opportunity, and operated soundly and economically.

That purpose will become even more important as aviation continues to grow, and change, over the coming decades.

Now, this Assembly must decide how to encourage that growth and transformation in ways that are safe, secure, sustainable, fair, and inclusive.

The State of Global Aviation compels us to recognize that the challenges are clear, and serious.

A system currently built to serve 4.6 billion passengers will not accommodate three times that number, unless we ensure its transformation. This includes strengthening oversight, modernizing physical and regulatory infrastructure, and harmonizing implementation of ICAO standards.

Against this backdrop, we must also accelerate the momentum towards the aspirational long-term goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, an historic agreement reached at the last session of the Assembly, just three years ago, this Assembly.

Achieving this goal will require dramatic progress across fuels, technologies, and operations.

New aircraft systems, highly automated operations, drones, and commercial space flights will help bring part of the solution to these challenges.

But while they bring benefits, their integration will also present new challenges for safety and capacity.

Meanwhile, long-standing gaps in infrastructure, finance, and training remain across our system. These are most acutely felt in developing states, landlocked countries, and small island states.

If these gaps are not addressed, growth will end up deepening differences, instead of reducing them.

Finally, our standards and the international air law framework must keep pace with technology and markets. If they lag behind, fragmentation and inefficiency will weaken aviation's benefits.

These challenges must be addressed urgently.

This Assembly must create constructive dialogue and adopt resolutions that allow ICAO to act. Our legacy will be measured by the decisions we make.

The State of Global Aviation today is defined by both challenges and opportunities. The ICAO Long Term Strategic Plan for 2050 reaffirms our framework for action.

The Plan defines three essential aspirations: eliminating fatalities, achieving net-zero carbon emissions, and ensuring aviation serves everyone, everywhere.

It includes six goals to structure and drive progress towards that vision:

The first goal is to ensure that every flight is both safe and secure. That means that continuous improvement on safety, and security will remain the foundation of everything we do.

The second goal focuses on environmental responsibility: setting a course for aviation to become environmentally sustainable and to contribute meaningfully to the fight against climate change.

Third, the Plan affirms that no country should be left behind, placing equity and inclusion at the heart of our global efforts. I want to underscore that No Country Left Behind is no longer simply an ICAO initiative but is now a Goal of our Strategic Plan.

Fourth, it is equally important that air transport contributes to prosperity and well-being, enabling growth and opportunity for people in all regions of the world.

And so, the fifth goal calls for aviation to offer seamless, reliable, and accessible mobility, so that people and goods can move efficiently, regardless of where they are.

Finally, the sixth goal is to ensure that the international air law framework remains responsive and effective, evolving in step with technological advances and the changing needs of our sector.

Well, to achieve these goals, the Plan identifies key enablers.

These include continuous improvement, innovation, digital transformation, capacity building, eliminating barriers to participation of women, partnerships, and resource mobilization.

ICAO is uniquely positioned to fulfill this vision.

But ICAO can only succeed if this Assembly gives clear guidance.

That guidance must come from dialogue and consensus, with Resolutions that give ICAO the authority and resources to act.

We have an opportunity to build on the momentum achieved since the last Assembly and continue in the direction in which the Organization has been moving.

From an organizational perspective, for example, we have proceeded in line with my Modernization Agenda for Governance - making accountability and transparency central to decision-making, and with operational enhancements, in line with the Transformational Objectives supported by you at the last Assembly.

We have made Council working methods more efficient and responsive, and we have improved our internal working environment, encouraging better communication and openness.

We have made progress, and the reforms implemented over these recent years provide a solid foundation for more improvement.

Our progress proves that ICAO can adapt, can modernize, and can deliver.

Together, through ICAO, we have promoted innovation and worked more closely with industry, addressing also a new mode of transportation, Advanced Air Mobility, understanding that regulation and partnership must go together.

We also renewed our commitment to the principle that no country is left behind, as I said just before with a crucial, and I would say historical, reorganization of the assistance and implementation support to States most in need.

We continued to strengthen global aviation safety by focusing our technical activities on high-risk categories of occurrences, expanding training, and improving capacity as needed by States.

We have advanced aviation cybersecurity and risk management, with the launch of the updated Global Aviation Security Plan and new cybersecurity guidance.

In the context of a tense global geopolitical climate, our crisis preparedness and response frameworks are also stronger, with new Contingency Coordination Teams and a revised Risk Assessment Manual for Conflict Zones.

In protecting the environment, ICAO has led the industry toward net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Additionally, for the first time ever, ICAO has established a workstream regarding

investments in Sustainable Aviation Fuels and Low Carbon Aviation Fuels thanks to the operationalization of the Finvest Hub project.

I would also like to highlight that ICAO is working closely with United Nations bodies on climate change, plastic pollution, and biodiversity.

In addition to our environmental progress, ICAO also has helped drive economic vitality.

We continue supporting air transport liberalization, and surveying States on market access and investment and addressing the needs of Landlocked Developing Countries to support connectivity and economic growth.

Workforce development advanced through the Next Generation of Aviation Professionals programme, workshops, and a new Global Aviation Education Programme.

To ensure aviation is seamless, reliable, and accessible – for cargo, and people – ICAO has been modernizing its facilitation standards. ICAO launched the Digital Travel Credential and improved the ICAO Public Key Directory, supporting secure and efficient border management. Training on traveller identification, accessibility, and facilitation has reached hundreds of states and stakeholders.

It is also important for me to highlight that we have enhanced guidance to prevent trafficking in persons, and to support the victims of accidents and their families.

Finally, ICAO has worked to keep international air law responsive and effective, promoting the ratification and implementation of key treaties through outreach, seminars, and legal training.

Distinguished Delegates,

These are but a few of ICAO's activities and achievements over the last triennium.

Now, a new chapter for aviation is commencing with this 42nd Session of the ICAO Assembly. Your decisions and outcomes here will not solely impact the next three years until the 43rd Session. Rather, your discussions and resolutions over the course of the next two weeks will provide strategic direction for aviation's development over the coming decades.

The world is asking:

How will we make aviation safer? How will we make it cleaner? How will we make it accessible to everyone?

We hear new voices demanding change.

We have a plan.

We have the tools.

Now, we need resolve.

Through cooperation and consensus, zero fatalities is achievable, net-zero carbon emissions is achievable, and inclusive growth is achievable.

What does this flight path for the future look like for your State? Given that this is my last Assembly as President of the ICAO Council, at the conclusion of an incredible six-year journey, it is my profound hope that this vision shapes your deliberations in the days ahead and when you return to your States, to take the decisions that will continue to shape the future of aviation for the next generation.

Distinguished Delegates,

The skies we shape here today will define the opportunities aviation offers the world for future generations.

Let this Assembly be remembered for defining aviation in the 21st century.

Thank you.