



**Opening address by the  
Secretary General of the  
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)  
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar  
to the Aviation Summit  
on the challenges of Sustainable Air Transportation in Brussels  
9/4/2024, Brussels, Belgium**

1. It a true privilege to be given the opportunity to deliver opening remarks at this *Aviation Summit on the Challenges of Sustainable Air Transportation*, along such distinguished speakers.
2. It is also a great honour to be back in Brussels, home to the European Union's institutions, and capital city of the Kingdom of Belgium, at this special time where Belgium is exercising the Presidency of the Council of the EU.
3. I was here one year ago and had the pleasure of exchanging with the European Parliament and meeting with representatives of the European Commission. My presence with you again today highlights the importance for ICAO of our cooperation and partnership with the European Union and its Member States.
4. This year is a landmark one for the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). We are celebrating the 80th anniversary of ICAO and of the signing of the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, and this Summit is an important opportunity to reflect on the considerable progress that has been made, particularly in three important areas: environmental protection, liberalization and digitalization.

5. Air transport is a crucial catalyst for sustainable development, delivering a tremendous range of socio-economic benefits to societies worldwide, by providing vital connectivity on a national, regional, and international scale.
6. For many countries, and in particular for least developed countries, small island developing States, and landlocked developing countries, aviation represents an essential lifeline to connect to the world.
7. That is why assuring the environmental and economic sustainability of air transport is crucial.
8. First on environmental protection, let me be clear: this is a strategic priority for ICAO and its Member States which are strongly committed to decarbonize aviation. At the 41st session of the ICAO Assembly in October 2022, States took an historic decision for air transport by adopting the Long-Term Global Aspirational Goal of net-zero carbon emissions for international aviation by 2050, also known as the LTAG.
9. This ambitious commitment is the backbone of all efforts across all regions in the world to accelerate investments in cleaner fuels, more fuel-efficient aircraft technologies, and more efficient operations and infrastructure.
10. Over the past decade, in the spirit of the *No Country Left Behind* initiative, the European Union has provided valuable support to ICAO to help States in Africa and the Caribbean develop their State Action Plans, monitor their aviation CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and support the implementation of mitigation measures. We are extremely grateful for that support.

11. The objective of net zero emissions by 2050 is not just words. We have started last year to operationalize it by addressing the elements which have the greatest potential to decarbonize aviation in the short- medium and long term: Sustainable Aviation Fuels. Indeed, the ICAO Global Framework for Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF), Lower Carbon Aviation Fuel (LCAF), and other Aviation Cleaner Energies was adopted at the Third Conference on Aviation Alternative Fuels (CAAF/3) in November of last year in Dubai.
12. The ICAO ‘Global Framework’, agreed to in Dubai, will support the deployment of cleaner fuels through its four-pillar approach:
13. Firstly, by driving States to implement policies that support the ICAO collective global aspirational vision to use SAF, LCAF and cleaner energy to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 5% by 2030;
14. Secondly, by using the building blocks of the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation’s (CORSIA) agreed sustainability criteria, certification and methodologies as an accepted basis to determine the eligibility of SAF, LCAF and cleaner energies;
15. Thirdly, by providing implementation support, including the crucial capacity-building activities, to facilitate the development and deployment of cleaner fuels, especially for developing countries.
16. And last but not least, by supporting access to financing and de-risking investments.
17. I have to emphasize that Europe is leading the way in all of these areas. This includes policy leadership, exemplified by ReFuelEU Aviation; financial support, as demonstrated by the flanking measures to the ReFuelEU aviation rules and by making the development of SAF in developing countries a flagship initiative under Global Gateway; and assistance to other States, with the

contributions from the EU and European States to capacity building on SAF, including in the context of the ICAO's Assistance, Capacity-building and Training for Sustainable Aviation Fuels (ACT SAF) programme.

18. Indeed, Europe's support of ACT-SAF is vital. It is enabling crucial work that is demonstrating the feasibility of SAF in many States.
19. By the end of 2023, ICAO had completed seven SAF feasibility studies, in Africa and in the Caribbean, which were funded by the European Commission. We will launch around 20 or more such studies on SAF by 2026, among which 10 in Africa and in India funded by the European Commission.
20. This important work will help States initiate their SAF market by highlighting options to launch concrete SAF production projects.
21. And I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the European Union and its Member States for their contributions to ICAO's Assistance, Capacity-building and Training on CORSIA (ACT-CORSIA) programme. The global implementation of ICAO's CORSIA – the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme – is absolutely crucial.
22. 126 States are participating in the scheme worldwide and in January of this year, CORSIA entered its first phase.
23. ICAO will continue to work with all States to ensure that they have all the necessary means for successful implementation.

24. Europe's leadership is truly inspiring and sets an exceptional example.
25. While aviation decarbonization is a priority, we should also look at the non CO2 emissions of aviation and their impact on climate change. Important uncertainties remain in quantifying some of aviation's non-CO2 climate terms, and in the underlying physical processes but as the science evolves, ICAO continues to assess the situation, identifying where action can be taken and bringing together our Member States and key stakeholders in various fora.
26. In that perspective, ICAO will notably host the 2024 ICAO Symposium on non-CO2 aviation emissions in Montréal from 16 to 18 September 2024.
27. I would now like to turn to the second key topic: the non-environmental aspects of aviation sustainability.
28. As seen in Europe, unlocking the full potential of global air transport will require, in part, the discarding of protectionist approaches and the adoption of liberalization efforts, in compliance with ICAO guidance on the economic regulation of international air transport.
29. The European Union is the perfect example of the benefits for the passengers and the industry of liberalizing air transport. The creation, 25 years ago, of a single air transport market among the Member States of the European Union, enabled to substantially increase air connectivity in the EU and to reduce air fares.
30. Liberalization is however a balancing act – it offers great potential to improve air connectivity and achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals, but it needs to be accompanied by skillfully crafted safeguards to ensure a competitive environment, and the highest possible social and labour standards.

31. In this regard, ICAO deeply appreciates the support from its Member States, as well as partner international organizations in this field, particularly the International Labour Organization and the International Transport Workers' Federation.
32. Beyond liberalization, the future of aviation and its sustainable development will require political commitment, financial stimuli, infrastructure investment, and a revival of consumer and public confidence, including in the area of environmental sustainability.
33. ICAO will continue to promote and encourage strong collaboration among States, regional economic communities, international organizations and industry to advance on these critical issues, which are essential for Europe.
34. As a third priority, I also wish to highlight aspects pertaining to digitalization.
35. Air transport today relies far more than ever on data-driven policy and decision-making.
36. In fact, direct access to reliable, accurate and comprehensive data is one of the key components for authorities worldwide to design flexible, scalable and forward looking national and regional aviation strategies.
37. ICAO has demonstrated its commitment to embracing data innovations through a range of projects and collaborations. Additionally, it has developed advanced dashboards that leverage big data to monitor the evolving trends and patterns in aviation during the post-COVID-19 pandemic era.

38. The facilitation of passenger and cargo movement through the implementation of agile, flexible and technology-led processes is also vital for sustainability of air transport.
39. Importantly for the future resilience of the flight network, seamless and contactless processes are more adaptable in the face of unpredictable circumstances.
40. As a result, investment in digitalization of border security and border management processes brings long term security and sustainability, as well as offering immediate rewards in terms of improved customer experience, reduced operating costs and enhanced process quality.
41. ICAO welcomes the on-going pilot projects examining use of the ICAO Digital Travel Credential that is taking place in the Netherlands, Finland, and Croatia, and which has been funded by the European Commission.
42. We appreciate the efforts being made to demonstrate the benefits of digitalization in immigration and to ensure the suitability of this technology for international use.
43. The positive results already coming from these pilot projects should add impetus to the push for advancement in the coming period.
44. This is particularly timely as 2024 is the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ICAO Annex 9 – Facilitation. In recognition of this milestone, 2024 has been designated as the ICAO Year of Facilitation.
45. This celebration is providing opportunities and encouragement to all stakeholders to work on and build improved capacities in this area, and as I conclude my remarks today, I would like you to reflect on what role you could play.

46. ICAO is encouraging airlines, airports and government authorities, including CAAs, immigration and customs authorities and document issuing authorities, to collaborate constructively through this year to add value to operations, particularly through digitalization.
47. So in closing, please allow me to highlight that it is indeed thanks to strong commitments that our objectives and pathway are clear.
48. ICAO and its Member States will keep working to deliver sustainable solutions that benefit aviation, prioritize the well-being of people, and protect our planet.
49. On this journey, the unwavering support and commitment of the European Union and its Member States remains crucial in raising global ambition and accelerating progress.
50. Thank you.