



ICAO

**Opening Remarks
by the Secretary General
of the International Civil Aviation Organization,
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar
to the Symposium for Assistance
to Aircraft Accident Victims and Their Families**

(Las Palmas, Spain, 1 December 2021)

1. It is my great honour to be able to be here with you in person today, and to have an opportunity to briefly add to what the Council President has already explained in terms of ICAO and its role in helping States set out effective victim assistance policies and programmes.
2. I would also take this moment to reiterate ICAO's appreciation to the Government of Spain and the Regional Government of the Canary Islands for hosting this Symposium.
3. In 1998, during the 32nd Session of the **ICAO** Assembly, the subject of assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families was considered for the first time.
4. The Assembly adopted Resolution A32-7 at that time, which underscored that:
 - the State of Occurrence should address the most critical needs of persons affected by a civil aviation accident;
 - that the policy of ICAO should be to ensure that the mental, physical and spiritual well-being of victims involved in civil aviation accidents and their families are considered and accommodated by ICAO and its Contracting States;
 - and that States should work to achievement alignment in their approaches to assisting victims of civil aviation accidents and their families.
5. During the same session, the Assembly also called on States to reaffirm their related commitments to support victims of civil aviation accidents and their family members.

6. It urged them to collaboratively and promptly develop and implement regulations and programmes to provide such support.
7. And lastly it urged the ICAO Council to develop materials to assist States in recognizing the priorities concerned.
8. This subject was further addressed in a side meeting during the 13th Air Navigation Conference and again in 2019 during the 40th Session of the ICAO Assembly, when more specific revisions were requested to Annex 9 of the Chicago Convention.
9. Throughout the past several years, ICAO has taken numerous initiatives to ensure that family assistance matters are adequately addressed.
10. Annex 13 to the Convention, which pertains specifically to international *Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation*, had its first provision associated with family assistance added in 1976, when the countries of origin for accident victims became officially entitled to participate in the investigation.
11. In 2005, Annex 9 provisions became Standard, requiring States to facilitate the timely and temporary entry of accident victim family members into their territory.
12. In 2013, the ICAO Council approved two new publications in this area: the *ICAO Policy on Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims and their Families*; and the *ICAO Manual on Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims and their Families*.
13. The manual in particular calls for actions on the part of States and relevant non-government organizations to reaffirm their commitment to ensure that adequate and sufficient assistance is provided to accident victims and their families.
14. It also encourages States to incorporate ICAO's policies when developing and implementing their legislation, regulations, policies and procedures related to family assistance.

15. The Manual further addresses the development of family assistance plans by aircraft and airport operators, highlighting relevant areas for attention and action.
16. As we speak, Annex 9 is also in the process of being amended to incorporate two proposals made by the Air Crash Victims' Families' Federation International.
17. Under the first proposal, ICAO plans to elevate an existing Recommended Practice to a Standard which will make it an obligation for States to establish legislation, regulations and/or policies in support of assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families.
18. The second proposal is to adopt a new Recommended Practice requiring aircraft and airport operators to do the same.
19. The ICAO Air Transport Committee has approved these two proposals, which have been sent to Member States and relevant international organizations for comments before final adoption by the Council.
20. In concluding, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Air Crash Victims' Families' Federation International for their contributions to assuring that this important issue is being addressed at the international level.
21. The ICAO Secretariat, through the delivery of capacity building and development of guidance materials, is continuing to closely support these efforts and outcomes.
22. I would also like to reaffirm to you that ICAO is attuned to the needs of families and victims of aircraft accidents, and stands ready to continue working with States, the aviation community and family associations towards the progress of this subject of utmost importance.

23. Aviation safety is an incredible team effort, as others have mentioned, but this same cooperation must also be directed toward ensuring that the rights of accident victims and their families are assured in the aftermath of these tragic events.
24. I look forward to these discussions and to moving this issue forward on the basis of your outcomes.
25. Thank you.