



**Closing address
by the Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar
to the 36th McGill University Model United Nations (McMUN)
(Sheraton – 2 February 2025)**

Madam Secretary-General, esteemed delegates,

1. It is my great pleasure to address the closing ceremony of this year's McGill University Model United Nations Conference.
2. The Secretary General of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is the most Senior UN official in Canada, and so I would like to begin by congratulating McGill University Model United Nations (McMUN) for the organization of this successful conference, and for selecting such an inspiring theme for 2025: Cultivating Change: Fighting Hunger, Reducing Waste.
3. I would also like to commend all of you for your participation in this important Model UN educational simulation. The skills you have developed here in leadership, consensus-building, and problem-solving will be essential, not only in your academic pursuits, but in shaping the future of our world.
4. It is my hope that the work you have done here may inspire you, as you carry the lessons and the insights you have gained through this experience with you into your future careers.
5. I should also highlight that your work here supports the progress under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
6. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are interrelated in many different ways, and I am sure you have gained particularly relevant insights into those goals pertaining to eliminating hunger and promoting responsible consumption.

7. Similarly, ICAO's work contributes directly to no fewer than 15 of the SDGs.
8. However, it is particularly important for me to take this opportunity to talk to you about our work to promote access to Quality Education and accelerate progress towards Gender Equality, Goals 4 and 5 respectively.
9. As part of ICAO's newly adopted Strategic Plan for 2026-2050, we are prioritizing Gender Equality and New Talent. Our focus is to attract, train, and retain young professionals and increase the representation of women, in order to ensure that the future workforce is reflective of the world it serves.
10. These priorities are being achieved by promoting aviation careers to new generations and supporting initiatives like our Next Generation of Aviation Professionals (NGAP) programme. The NGAP programme encourages global collaboration and dialogue at conferences and events, where young people can learn from experts and build a network within the industry.
11. Attracting new talent is only part of our effort. The organization is also committed to ensuring that the future of aviation is built on a foundation of gender equality.
12. ICAO is advocating for an inclusive industry where opportunities are accessible to all, regardless of gender. By promoting opportunities for women, enhancing skills development, and facilitating the exchange of diversity and inclusion best practices, ICAO is advancing gender equality at all levels of aviation.
13. These enablers are crucial to the success of ICAO's Strategic Plan for the next 25 years, which supports the organization's mission to connect the world more safely, securely, and sustainably.
14. As ICAO Member States align with the plan, they will help drive progress towards its three key objectives: ensuring zero fatalities from accidents and acts of unlawful interference; reducing carbon emissions to net-zero, and creating a more connected, accessible, inclusive, and affordable air transport system.
15. Let me be very clear: Achieving these incredibly ambitious goals will require the support and contributions of absolutely everyone who has the skill and the desire. That is why it is absolutely

vital to our future to ensure our sector is not only open to skilled and motivated young people like you, but in fact attracts your attention and participation.

16. The plan also comes as ICAO celebrates its 80th anniversary and prepares for our own next session of the Assembly of Member States this September. This meeting takes place every 3 years and thousands of delegates from around the world will gather at our Headquarters here in Montreal to set the future priorities for international civil aviation.
17. Just as you have worked together on drafting working papers and adopting resolutions on some of the world's most pressing challenges, our upcoming Assembly will be an opportunity to advance our collective efforts under this Strategic Plan.
18. The future of sectors like aviation depends on the ability to work across borders, cultures, and disciplines.
19. So, as you leave this conference, I urge you to continue participating in such important exercises and cultivating change with the same passion, enthusiasm, and creativity you have shown here.
20. Once again, I congratulate you all on your participation, and wish you continued success, both in your academic journeys and in your future careers.
21. Thank you.