



Video Address
by the ICAO Secretary General
Juan Carlos Salazar
Air Transportation Forum - Harvard University
8 March 2025

1. The International Civil Aviation Organization works with governments and countless air transport organizations to set global aviation standards and strategies. As Secretary General and a graduate of Harvard Kennedy School, I welcome this opportunity to address how we are tackling aviation's critical challenges at this crucial moment - when air transport has surpassed pre-pandemic levels and faces complex sustainability and development challenges.
2. Looking forward, ensuring that air transport can continue to grow and deliver prosperity is presenting complex policy challenges. This is of course particularly true in face of the climate emergency, and as we work to deliver air connectivity to those underdeveloped markets where it is needed most.
3. Your convening of this Forum is extremely timely, and I am grateful for this opportunity to provide ICAO's own outlook for the years and decades to come. I would particularly like to focus on the very pertinent themes you have chosen for discussion – the enhancement of air services, sustainability, and the required airport infrastructure.
4. The ICAO Long-term Strategic Plan for 2026 through 2050 addresses these challenges through our shared vision: zero fatalities in international aviation, net-zero carbon emissions, and an integral role in a thriving, connected, accessible, inclusive, and affordable transport system.
5. Let me walk you through our six interconnected strategic goals and how they shape aviation's future.
6. Our first strategic goal focuses on safety and security – the foundation of aviation. Even as growth puts pressure on infrastructure, we remain committed to achieving zero fatalities from accidents and

acts of unlawful interference. This is particularly challenging in megacities, where our forecasts show robust air transport growth.

7. To address these challenges, we envision future-ready airports built on resilience by design. Through our Total Airport Management framework, Internet of Things technologies enable end-to-end integration of operations, optimizing both safety and efficiency.
8. We are also helping States embrace innovations like advanced air mobility, developing safety regulations that actively encourage new solutions for airport-city connectivity, without compromising our core values.
9. Our second strategic goal addresses environmental sustainability through two critical paths: achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, and adapting aviation operations and infrastructure to address climate change impacts. Our technical analysis shows that the greatest potential for CO₂ emissions reduction lies in Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) and other cleaner energy sources.
10. The ICAO Global Framework agreement of 2023 set clear targets for 2030, supported by two key initiatives: our Finvest Hub connecting sustainable aviation projects with potential investors and our Assistance, Capacity-building and Training for Sustainable Aviation Fuels (ACT-SAF) programme, providing States implementation support.
11. Our third strategic goal focuses on seamless, accessible, and reliable mobility for all through regulations and procedures that facilitate smooth air navigation and reduce operational complexity.
12. Modern airports are central to this vision. ICAO actively supports States in airport modernization through policies, guidance materials, and global partnerships. As airports evolve beyond transportation hubs, they are becoming integral parts of their communities, driving economic growth and urban development.
13. This transformation is already visible as airports become major business enterprises. Airport-centric logistics infrastructure and Aerocities are emerging as self-sustainable urban ecosystems, carefully balanced with aviation requirements through innovative planning approaches.

14. Importantly, these modern airports also serve as crucial humanitarian infrastructure, becoming vital hubs during natural disasters and supporting progress toward UN Sustainable Development Goals.
15. Our fourth strategic goal promotes economic development of air transport to deliver prosperity and societal well-being. This requires a comprehensive framework of strategic planning, infrastructure investment, and technological innovation, underpinned by robust regulatory systems.
16. Air transport liberalization is central to this vision. Through our Air Services Negotiation Event (ICAN), we facilitate crucial bilateral and regional negotiations that strengthen global connectivity. Our recent event in Kuala Lumpur demonstrated this approach's effectiveness with almost 600 bilateral meetings advancing our air services network.
17. Looking ahead, our Long-Term Vision for International Air Transport Liberalization charts a course toward a more open and competitive industry that drives economic growth while ensuring fair competition and equal opportunities for all stakeholders.
18. Our fifth strategic goal ensures our legal frameworks remain robust and relevant; and
19. Our sixth goal – that no country is left behind – reflects our commitment to global inclusivity. Through targeted capacity building and implementation support, we help States overcome resource limitations, particularly in developing regions. This ensures aviation's benefits reach every corner of the globe.
20. Supporting these goals are critical enablers: continuous organizational improvement, attracting new talent including through gender equality initiatives, embracing innovation, and building strong partnerships while ensuring sustainable resource mobilization.
21. As I speak to you today – the next generation of aviation leaders – I am particularly excited about the transformative role you will play in shaping this future. Your generation brings fresh perspectives, digital natives' intuition, and an innate understanding of sustainability imperatives that will be crucial to aviation's evolution.

22. The challenges we face demand innovative thinking and new approaches. Whether you are studying business, engineering, environmental science, or public policy, aviation needs your talent and creativity. As the industry undergoes unprecedented technological transformation – from artificial intelligence and automation to new propulsion systems and sustainable fuels – we need bright minds who can bridge traditional aviation expertise with emerging technologies and evolving societal expectations.
23. This is why ICAO has made the development of Next Generation Aviation Professionals a key priority. Through our NGAP Programme, we are working to ensure that enough qualified professionals are available to operate, manage, and maintain the future international air transport system. We are actively creating pathways for young professionals like yourselves to contribute to aviation's future through initiatives ranging from innovation competitions to leadership development programmes.
24. Given the tremendous expertise and experience gathered here today, I strongly encourage you to consider innovative ways to advance ICAO's goals and support our activities.
25. Thank you for your attention, and I wish you excellent discussions.
26. Thank you.