



**Opening Remarks by the
Secretary General of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)**

**Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar
as Chief Guest at the Third Regional Aviation Ministers' Meeting**

Virtual Remarks

20 – 21 March 2025, Suva, Fiji

1. I am honoured to address you at this 3rd Regional Aviation Ministers Meeting.
2. Let me begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to the Government of Fiji and the Civil Aviation Authority for their exceptional hospitality in hosting this important meeting, and for providing a warm Pacific welcome.
3. Many of the most audacious feats of international aviation have been achieved in this region, and your work at this meeting will continue in this proud tradition.
4. You will also be building on decades of successful and productive cooperation launched by the Chicago Convention.
5. Born from the vision of 52 States in 1944, this remarkable framework now unites 193 nations in pursuit of the safe, secure and sustainable development of international civil aviation. I'm particularly pleased to note that the 193rd signatory, Tuvalu, is represented here today.
6. The Convention's enduring strength lies in its recognition of the role aviation plays as a catalyst for peace and prosperity, which remains our focus today.

7. Through the Convention, States have mandated ICAO to develop international standards and strategies. These standards form the foundation for national regulatory frameworks, enabling and fostering safe, secure, efficient, and sustainable air connectivity.
8. ICAO fulfills this mandate through a comprehensive, consultative process involving Member States and international aviation organizations, and leveraging the expertise of airlines, airports, air navigation service providers, pilots, and manufacturers, to name but a few. This ensures that our work is informed by the best available technical knowledge.
9. This collaborative approach has produced our key frameworks - the Global Aviation Safety Plan, the Global Air Navigation Plan, and the Global Aviation Security Plan - along with their corresponding regional implementation strategies.
10. Under our *No Country Left Behind* initiative, ICAO also provides critical technical assistance and capacity building support across the region. It is delivered through our APAC Regional Office and our Capacity Development and Implementation Bureau, supported by donor and partner States. We are committed to delivering this assistance, especially where it is needed most.
11. We have recognized the unique challenges faced by the Pacific Small Island Developing States. The establishment of a dedicated PSIDS Liaison Officer within our regional structure has created a powerful link between those States and ICAO's technical resources, ensuring States receive targeted support for safety oversight, security systems, and air navigation services, among others. The Liaison Officer works to understand your specific needs, and coordinate effective technical assistance through our regional expertise.
12. This will become evermore crucial as we proceed with the implementation of ICAO's new Strategic Plan for 2026-2050, which was recently approved by the ICAO Council. This plan will shape our work together over the coming decades.
13. The Plan charts our course towards highly accessible, truly sustainable, and perfectly safe air transportation worldwide. It is our roadmap as air cargo doubles and passenger traffic nearly triples over the next 25 years.

14. Thanks to our close consultations, the goals of the Strategic Plan align directly with the Pacific Regional Aviation Strategy, or PRAS, that you launched at the 41st ICAO Assembly in 2022.
15. The vision of the PRAS is clear: to create a harmonized and connected Pacific aviation system that supports safe, secure, and sustainable operations across all Pacific Island States. This vision is aligned with both the ICAO long term plan and the broader 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.
16. The first and most fundamental strategic goal under the ICAO plan and the PRAS provides a great example. It is about ensuring every flight is safe and secure. ICAO's aim is absolute: we must protect air passengers and the public from all safety risks and security threats. This includes safeguarding against any act of unlawful interference or terrorism. We have set our sights on the ultimate target - zero fatalities from aviation accidents or incidents.
17. This goal directly advances the Aviation Safety and Security and Harmonized Regulatory Systems priorities set forth in the PRAS.
18. Our second strategic goal under the ICAO plan focuses on environmental protection, which aligns directly with the same priority under the PRAS. We must achieve both net-zero carbon emissions and meet rising global demand for air transport. We are all aware how particularly crucial this is for the Pacific Island nations, which are among the most vulnerable to climate change impacts.
19. Our third strategic goal addresses mobility - ensuring aviation delivers reliable, accessible, and seamless travel for all.
20. Reliability means you can count on the system to deliver - even during high demand or disruptions from weather, natural disasters, or other challenges. This builds on our standards for safety, security, and airspace management.
21. Accessibility ensures everyone can use air travel services, whether from busy hubs or remote Pacific airports. We must accommodate different operational capabilities while maintaining our high standards. We must achieve inclusive and universally accessible air transport for persons with disabilities and reduced mobility.

22. And Seamless mobility means travelers experience smoother, and more efficient journeys through airports, immigration, and customs, supported by sensible procedures and smart technology.
23. This aligns with PRAS's Security and Facilitation objectives and Regional Connectivity priorities, particularly Aviation Safety and Security and Harmonized Regulatory Systems. This is particularly crucial for Pacific Island nations, where air connectivity is often the primary link between communities.
24. Our fourth strategic goal is "No Country Left Behind" - ensuring that every nation can participate fully in global aviation.
25. The No Country Left Behind goal requires fostering global collaboration and cooperation, providing continuous capacity building and support, and promoting effective implementation of policies, standards and practices. We must work together to overcome resource limitations in emerging economies and ensure equitable access to aviation benefits worldwide. For Pacific Island nations, this commitment directly supports the PRAS objectives of strengthening aviation capability and sustainable economic development.
26. Our fifth strategic goal focuses on strengthening international air law and regulatory frameworks. This goal supports all PRAS objectives by establishing adequate institutional and legal arrangements that maintain compliance with ICAO and other international requirements.
27. In this context, several key international air law instruments require urgent attention. The 2016 Protocols regarding Articles 50(a) and 56 of the Chicago Convention are critical to expanding the representation of the ICAO Council and the Air Navigation Commission, which is in turn crucial to those consultative policy processes I mentioned earlier. However, none of the PSIDs States have ratified these protocols.
28. We also need faster progress on treaties addressing emerging threats like cyber-attacks and unruly passengers - specifically the 2010 Beijing Convention and Protocol, and the 2014 Montréal Protocol.
29. Furthermore, while the Montreal Convention 1999 has broad acceptance, universal ratification remains essential to ensure standardized air carrier liability rules for all travelers. Your advocacy

for ratification of these instruments by your governments is vital for strengthening our global legal framework.

30. Now, our sixth and final goal focuses on the economic development of air transport to assure the delivery of economic prosperity and societal well-being for all. In this region, sustainable air transport development is particularly crucial for tourism, trade, and social connectivity.
31. That is why the alignment of the 2026-2050 plan with the PRAS is so significant. We are creating a comprehensive framework that supports global development by addressing the specific needs of the Pacific.
32. We are committed to the implementation of our plan and have identified four high-priority enablers towards this.
33. First, ICAO is continuing its organizational improvement. We must build on the extremely positive momentum that we have gained over the past two years and continue this work into the next triennium and beyond.
34. Second, innovation remains critical. Our Innovation Strategy, mandated by the 41st Assembly, will help us focus the work of our technical panels and study groups more effectively.
35. Third, we're committed to building aviation's future workforce. This means attracting diverse, capable talent who will grow our industry over the coming decades.
36. Finally, partnerships and resource mobilization will be vital to our success.
37. The FINVEST Hub for Sustainable Aviation Fuel and other cleaner energy sources provides a great example of how ICAO can uniquely lead in coordinating financial and development partnerships for aviation's future.
38. It also reflects how we are identifying and implementing solutions in light of the fact that while our responsibilities continue to expand, from climate change and cybersecurity to drones, commercial space, and complex information systems, our budget has not kept pace.

39. This growing gap between our mandate and our means threatens our ability to deliver on our plans, including those technical assistance and capacity building activities that are particularly essential here in the Pacific.
40. That is why it is extremely important to seize the opportunity presented by RAMM3 to strengthen our collaboration.
41. We must build on the momentum established at the Second Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference in New Delhi last September. The New Delhi Declaration strengthens our work through its support of ICAO's global plans, new technology, sustainable infrastructure, gender equality, emission reduction, and regional cooperation in air traffic management, search and rescue, and aviation security.
42. We must also keep a key focus on implementing the recommendations from our Pacific Small Island Developing States Aviation Needs Analysis Study. The PSIDS Liaison Officer has been instrumental in ensuring active participation from all PSIDS in organized activities. Strengthening this role will be critical to achieving our ambitions.
43. The proposed Regional Safety and Security Oversight Organization would also play a pivotal role in coordinating regional expertise and resources in this area.
44. We must also reinforce support for the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO), which plays a crucial role in regional oversight and development.
45. This also points to the fact that Pacific Civil Aviation Authorities currently lack sufficient institutional autonomy and financial sustainability. Addressing this fact will help ensure the resiliency of your aviation sectors and support all the other goals I have mentioned here today.
46. On that point, innovation must extend beyond technology to encompass regulatory framework and operational models. These changes will enhance the agility of our aviation ecosystem.
47. This refers to why the human element will remain central. We must invest in training and competency-based management while building a more diverse and inclusive workforce. This approach will address the region's pressing human resources challenges.

48. Success will require close cooperation among States, industry, and ICAO. In this effort, I want to acknowledge the vital support we have received to date from Fiji, Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and the United States.
49. Finally, your leadership on environmental protection and the climate emergency in particular present you with a distinct opportunity. By implementing ICAO's Long-Term Global Aspirational Goal for net-zero emissions by 2050 and developing Sustainable Aviation Fuels, the Pacific can show the world how to balance aviation growth with environmental responsibility.
50. Before I conclude today, I would like to take a moment to reiterate the vital importance of sufficient resourcing for ICAO.
51. ICAO has improved planning and budgeting methods for the next triennium Business Plan and Budget, but we need your support.
52. We need you to communicate the importance of our programmes to your financial, transport and foreign affairs ministries, as they evaluate the ICAO Council's budget request. Too often, investments in aviation safety and capacity building are undervalued because they lack immediate, visible returns.
53. This affects both ICAO and the aviation development and operations of your States directly.
54. Now, I am confident that RAMM3 will serve as a tremendous platform for making progress on the priorities I've presented today. This will be achieved by focusing our discussions on pragmatic ways to move forward, particularly as we look ahead to the 42nd session of the ICAO Assembly, which will convene at our Montreal Headquarters on 23 September 2025.
55. Let me express my gratitude for this opportunity to address you once again. Your continued dedication to advancing international civil aviation is deeply appreciated.
56. I would also like to thank our hosts here in Fiji once again for their outstanding support throughout this meeting.

Thank you.