



**Opening remarks delivered on behalf of the Secretary General
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
by Jiarong Yan, Director of the Office of the Secretary General,
to the 2019 McGill Model United Nations Global Leadership Forum**

(ICAO HQ, Montréal, 24 January 2019)

1. Good evening everybody! Welcome to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the only United Nations specialized agency headquartered in Canada.
2. It's my great honor to deliver some remarks here on behalf of ICAO's Secretary General, Dr. Fang Liu, who is abroad on mission. I'd like to start by welcoming all of you, tomorrow's leaders, to today's United Nations!
3. It's truly heartwarming to gaze out upon so many young people from such a multitude of countries and cultures, coming together to find solutions to the world's problems.
4. It is reassuring to see the most dedicated and committed young people still look to the UN as a source of positive... and truly global change.
5. Together, you represent the best of what the United Nations aspires to.
6. It is also an important reminder for me that the United Nations has a special responsibility to serve our future generations.
7. Tonight's Global Leadership Forum is coming at a time when ICAO and its sister UN agencies are broadening the scope of our assistance and outreach to the world's best and brightest young leaders.
8. This is because your generation is highly equipped, not just with knowledge and passion, but also with the technological skills and awareness to put our planet on a sustainable and prosperous path.

9. Today's global youth demographic comprises almost two billion people just like you, and that's two billion times more enthusiasm and energy we can use to address some of the world's most pressing challenges.
10. In addition to enthusiasm and energy, your presence here tonight also symbolizes your keen interest in multilateralism, and your validation of the role of international cooperation in making our world more just and prosperous for all.
11. This is exactly the spirit of multi-diplomacy which defined the UN's founding principles.
12. It was that very same spirit which influenced the drafting of the *Convention on International Civil Aviation*, also known as the *Chicago Convention* – the agreement which established ICAO even before the UN Charter was formalized.
13. This year in fact will be the 75th anniversary of ICAO's role in bringing countries together to share their skies to their mutual benefit, and to our benefit too of course.
14. The drafters of our *Convention* were visionary in recognizing how the post-war air transport network could evolve from military to civilian use.
15. They understood that world peace was reliant on the peoples of the world being connected by air travel so that they could learn and trade among one another, and ultimately cultivate the deeper understanding needed to foster sustainable global good will.
16. And today, thanks to their foresight and determination, we have an incredible global air transport network at our disposal which can take us anywhere in the world, or fly us goods which we purchase online in a matter of days, or even hours.
17. It currently takes over 100,000 flights every 24 hours to accomplish this, carrying over 10 million passengers and many tonnes of high value freight each and every day.

18. In just 15 years' time that number of flights is poised to double, which helps to underscore the challenges the aviation sector is facing today, and why the Next Generations like you here tonight are so important to our future.
19. As a UN specialized agency, ICAO is committed to improving our Member States' awareness of how the availability of safe and dependable air transport services will deliver a very positive impact to their socio-economic development.
20. As an overall sector, civil aviation contributes fundamentally to States' attainment of no fewer than 15 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs, but we also face some hurdles in keeping up the positive momentum.
21. One very important reality these projections point to is that our sector will require an entire new generation of skilled pilots, controllers and other skilled professionals – and very soon.
22. It will also need a new generation of directors and managers to lead this new young workforce.
23. This is why ICAO has been working for the last decade with young people just like you, under the banner of our ICAO Next Generation of Aviation Professionals programme, or NGAP.
24. Just last December in fact, we held the Second NGAP Global Summit in Shenzhen, China, where over 1,000 industry, academic, and other experts were there on hand, in addition of course to young professionals from 32 countries.
25. An additional 180 students, representing 27 universities from around the world, further benefitted from a *Model ICAO Forum* that was conducted in parallel to the NGAP Summit.
26. As you begin this Latest Global Leadership Forum tonight, please therefore keep in mind that senior management here at ICAO are eager to see you take up careers in aviation in the years ahead, and that you are most welcome to join ICAO's next Model ICAO Forum as well as the next NGAP Summit.

27. My dear friends and young leaders, the United Nations has proven, at various stages of its history, that it is capable of working on the frontlines to protect the interests of the world and its peoples.
28. It does this by galvanizing support among States for the three vital pillars of the UN i.e. Peace and Security; Development, and Human Rights.
29. And while tremendous strides have been made on these fronts in every region of the world, there are still formidable challenges requiring urgent attention, and some very pressing ones relating to security and opportunities for young people in many areas of the world today.
30. Quite obviously the sustainable future of any nation begins with how it protects and nurtures the potential inherent in its youngest citizens.
31. Accordingly, and to help all countries recognize these points and ensure the security and opportunities which today's youth have a right to expect, UN Secretary General Guterres launched the United Nations Youth Strategy, *Youth 2030*, the day before the UN General Assembly kicked-off last September.
32. The UN also launched *Generation Unlimited* on that same occasion, a global multi-stakeholder partnership initiated by UNICEF aimed at ensuring that young people globally are actively engaged by a meaningful learning, training or employment opportunity by 2030.
33. The UN is committed to reset the UN system's focus on youth, and to reorient and mainstream the organization's activities towards your generation and those which will follow.
34. Youth 2030 comprises five priorities with the goals of amplifying youth voices for the promotion of a peaceful, just and sustainable world; supporting young people's greater access to quality education and health services; helping young people gain access to decent work and productive employment; protecting and promoting the rights of young people and support their civic and political engagement; and lastly engaging young people as catalysts for peace and security and humanitarian action.

35. *Youth 2030* also recognizes that your energy and imagination are critical to how our world will unite and ultimately deliver on *Agenda 2030* and its visionary Sustainable Development Goals, and in looking across this room tonight I am confident your generation is poised to take on this mantle and carry us forward.
36. In closing now, young leaders of the future, let me please commend you on your enthusiasm and commitment. Being a leader requires both, and in no small amount.
37. I would also like to reaffirm that ICAO is deeply honoured to be providing its facilities and support to assist your ambitious 2019 Global Leader Forum programme, and that we have greatly appreciated the kind invitation to participate in tonight's event from your own Secretary General, Mr. Christopher Balian.
38. I am counting on you to be the change agents and torchbearers that the world desperately needs, and it would be my honour now to field any questions you may have on the role of the UN and ICAO in helping you achieve your goals.
39. Thank you.