



## **OPENING CEREMONY**

### **61st ICAO Directors General of Civil Aviation Conference — Asia and Pacific Region 7 September 2026 | Mandarin Oriental, Kuala Lumpur**

#### **SALUTATION**

Yang Berhormat Loke Siew Fook, Minister of Transport;

Mr. Toshiyuki Onuma, President of the ICAO Council;

Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar, Secretary General of ICAO;

Yang Berbahagia Dato' Seri Jana Sathiran Muniayan, Secretary General of the Ministry of Transport Malaysia;

Yang Berbahagia Dato' Mohamed Sharil Tarmizi, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia;

Mr. Tao Ma, Regional Director of the ICAO Asia and Pacific Office;

Authority Members of the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia;

Distinguished Directors General and Heads of Delegation;

Distinguished colleagues;

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning, selamat datang, and welcome to Malaysia.

It is a great honour for Malaysia, and for the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia, to welcome Directors General, aviation leaders and delegates from across the Asia and Pacific Region to Kuala Lumpur for the 61st ICAO Directors General of Civil Aviation Conference.

We are deeply honoured by your presence and grateful that you have made the journey to be with us. As host, CAAM has worked to create a conference experience that is substantive, meaningful and distinctly Malaysian.

Over the coming days, we have planned a programme that combines focused discussions on the issues shaping our sector with opportunities to exchange ideas, strengthen professional networks and build friendships across the region. Beyond the conference sessions, we also hope you will enjoy a taste of Malaysia through our cuisine, culture and warm hospitality.

Our colleagues across CAAM look forward to hosting you throughout the week. We hope you will feel at home in Kuala Lumpur, enjoy the experiences we have prepared, and leave



Malaysia not only with productive outcomes, but also with lasting memories and new friendships.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Asia and Pacific is one of the fastest-growing aviation regions in the world. It is increasingly at the centre of the global aviation system - connecting economies, bringing people together and opening new pathways for trade, tourism and development.

But growth brings responsibility.

The more connected our skies become, the more closely our responsibilities are intertwined. Our skies connect us long before our borders separate us. An aircraft does not recognise the boundaries we draw on a map. Neither does a safety risk, a cyber threat or an operational disruption.

Aviation safety, security, sustainability and resilience therefore cannot be advanced by one State acting alone. They must be shared responsibilities, supported by cooperation, mutual trust and a willingness to learn from one another.

This is why the theme of DGCA/61 — “Smart Skies: Emerging Technologies for Safe, Secure, Sustainable and Efficient Aviation” — is both timely and important.

When we speak of smart skies, we naturally think of artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, unmanned aircraft and advanced air mobility. But smart aviation is not simply about adopting the newest technology. It is about having the foresight and wisdom to use technology responsibly, and ensuring that progress serves the safety and interests of the people who depend on aviation.

Technology is moving faster than traditional regulatory cycles. Our challenge is to ensure that regulation enables responsible innovation while remaining firm in its most fundamental purpose: protecting safety, security and public confidence.

This requires regulatory approaches that are adaptive, risk-proportionate and performance-based. It also requires us to understand not only what new technologies can do, but how they may fail, how they behave under uncertainty, and where human judgement and accountability must remain.

This is particularly important for aviation safety. The regulator of tomorrow cannot wait for tomorrow’s accident before learning today’s lesson. We must continue moving from reactive oversight towards predictive safety - from collecting data, to turning data into intelligence, and from intelligence into prevention.



Malaysia has been working with fellow Member States to strengthen collaboration in the use of safety data. But data alone is not enough. Data may show us where a risk lies; trust determines whether we are prepared to share, learn and act on it together.

Meaningful regional cooperation therefore requires both technological capability and institutional trust.

We must also prepare for the next frontier: the Low Altitude Economy. Unmanned aircraft systems and advanced air mobility offer enormous potential, but they also raise new questions involving airspace, certification, traffic management, infrastructure and accountability.

These questions must be addressed before the technologies reach scale. Regulatory sandboxes and controlled environments can give us the space to test innovation safely, gather evidence and develop proportionate rules without compromising established aviation operations.

At the same time, we must ensure that sustainability remains integral to every discussion about growth and innovation. A smarter aviation system must also be a more efficient and sustainable one - capable of meeting rising demand while managing its environmental responsibilities.

Above all, we must remember that aviation's greatest asset remains its people.

Technology can transform aviation, but only people can transform institutions. We need regulators who understand technology, engineers who understand regulation, operators who understand safety, and young professionals who are prepared to lead the aviation system of tomorrow.

Capacity development is therefore not simply a supporting activity. It is strategic aviation infrastructure, and it must remain central to our regional agenda.

Distinguished colleagues,

As we begin DGCA/61, I would like to leave you with three words:

**Align. Share. Act.**

Align our approaches where practical. Share our knowledge, data and lessons. And act on what we agree.

Because the success of this conference will not ultimately be measured by the number of papers presented or the discussions held in Kuala Lumpur. It will be measured by what we take forward, what we implement and what changes when we return home.



Let DGCA/61 be remembered not simply because we met in Kuala Lumpur, but because something changed because we met in Kuala Lumpur.

The skies are changing. Our responsibility is to ensure that safety, trust and cooperation advance with them - and are never left behind.

On behalf of CAAM, thank you once again for being with us. We look forward to your active participation, your perspectives and the spirit of collaboration that has always defined the aviation community of our region.

I wish all of you a productive, successful and memorable DGCA/61.

Thank you.