

**61ST CONFERENCE OF
DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION**

*Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
7 September - 11 September 2026*

AGENDA ITEM 9: UPDATES

**ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL AVIATION FORUM – PROPOSED
TERMS OF REFERENCE AND OPERATIONAL
ARRANGEMENTS**

(Presented by the Regional Cooperation Mechanism Task Force)

SUMMARY

This paper presents proposed Terms of Reference (ToR) and operational arrangements for the establishment of an Asia Pacific Regional Aviation Forum (APRAF).

The Forum is intended to complement, rather than duplicate, existing regional mechanisms by providing a practical and low-cost platform for ICAO APAC Member States to develop coordinated regional positions on aviation issues of common strategic interest before global ICAO meetings.

The proposed ToR define the Forum's purpose, scope, governance, representation and operating arrangements, with the objective of strengthening the APAC region's collective contribution to global aviation policy while leveraging the existing DGCA Conference framework.

Action by the Conference is in paragraph 4.

* Note: Some members of the Taskforce do not support the Forum being established due to concerns about the relationship between the functions of the forum and the functions of DGCA.

ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL AVIATION FORUM – PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE AND OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 At the 60th Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Conference in Sendai, Japan, the Conference recommended that the Regional Cooperation Mechanism Task Force (RCM TF) continue its work to explore the value and practicality of the dedicated APAC Regional Aviation Forum (APRAF) including its scope, objectives, and operational approach based on comments received and report back to the 61st DGCA.

1.2 The TF subsequently established a Working Group to develop Terms of Reference (outlined below) detailing the value, practicality, scope and objectives of a possible Regional Aviation Forum, including its proposed operational approach, for consideration by the 61st DGCA.

Note: Some members of the Taskforce do not support the Forum being established due to concerns about the relationship between the functions of the Forum and the functions of the DGCA.

2. DISCUSSION

Asia Pacific Regional Aviation Forum – Terms of Reference

Overview

2.1 The following Terms of Reference (ToR) for an APAC Regional Aviation Forum (the Forum) cover all of the key reasons, governance and operational arrangements for the Forum.

2.2 The ToR outline the value, purpose and scope of the Forum, its low cost, practical administration, its membership composition and the key objectives of the Forum.

Value of the Forum

2.3 The APAC region unlike most other major ICAO regions currently does not have its own dedicated Commission or forum to consolidate and represent a single regional voice in international aviation discussions.

2.4 This is most evident at events such as the ICAO Assembly or Air Navigation Conference, where other regions present a unified, regional position on international aviation strategic objectives being discussed and agreed to at these meetings.

2.5 The Forum provides a means of reaching APAC regional positions and establishing an APAC regional voice on specific international aviation issues that can be presented at ICAO and other international and cross regional events.

Purpose of the Forum

2.6 The Forum's sole purpose would be for senior Government officials (potentially from aviation and other portfolios such as foreign affairs as appropriate) from ICAO APAC Member States to identify, develop, and consolidate regional positions and perspectives on aviation issues of common interest, such that agreed regional positions could be subsequently presented and promoted at ICAO meetings and at other global organisations and fora.

Practicality of the Forum

2.7 The Forum may be held as a side session during the annual DGCA Conference – for States to discuss and mutually decide on regional positions on aviation issues of common interest.

2.8 This side session arrangement will reduce the administrative burden on the hosting State and encourage broad participation from States/Administrations throughout the region by being held with the already established five-day DGCA event.

2.9 The role of the Conference's host State would be to chair the Forum meeting, provide basic logistical support – a meeting room and sending invitations to attend the Forum with the proposed topics for discussion. Attendance at the Forum, like DGCA, will be at the discretion of individual APAC States/Administrations.

2.10 A small Forum support team would be formed from volunteer APAC Member States/Administrations, and APAC representatives on the ICAO Council, to provide ongoing stewardship of the Forum's annual agenda – calling for papers from States for the Forum and completing a record of outcomes.

2.11 This team, with representatives from all parts of the APAC region, can also assist States with preparation of papers for the Forum's consideration and subsequent coordination of papers agreed to by the Forum to be presented at global ICAO meetings including confirming all APAC States that wish to co-sponsor regional papers going to ICAO meetings for agreement.

Scope of the Forum

2.12 The Forum would not duplicate the roles being played by other mechanisms in the region, such as the DGCA Conference. The DGCA Conference primarily supports regional cooperation and coordination for the implementation of ICAO SARPs, policies and regional priorities, whereas the Forum would focus on developing coordinated regional positions on aviation issues of common interest for consideration at global ICAO meetings. Accordingly, the Forum is intended to complement, rather than duplicate, the functions of the DGCA Conference. The complementary roles of the Forum and DGCA are outlined in Attachment A.

2.13 The Forum's agenda will be set by our region's senior Government aviation officials sending in proposed agenda items to the small Forum support team for consideration and preparation of a final agenda for APAC States/Administrations endorsement before the Forum meeting. All APAC States/Administrations will have the opportunity to indicate their support or otherwise for Forum outcomes and accordingly whether they wish to be included or not included as sponsors of papers agreed to out of the Forum that are subsequently to be presented at global ICAO meetings.

2.14 The threshold for aviation matters to be considered by the Forum would be those that:

- a) are of common interest and importance across the region – including issues those that cover any of ICAO's strategic objectives (such as facilitation and economic development); and
- b) have merit in being promoted by our region through ICAO (and potentially other international and regional organisations) to help make an effective contribution to the development of international civil aviation globally and in our region.

Representation at the forum

2.15 The Forum would be open to be attended by ICAO Member States/Administrations from the APAC region, with other ICAO region's interested Member States also able to attend at the invitation of the host State, in consultation with the small Forum support team.

2.16 States/Administrations should ensure appropriate representation in terms of authority

and subject-matter expertise to discuss and agree on issues dealt with at the Forum.

2.17 International and regional organisations, including the ICAO APAC Regional Office and industry association representatives may also be invited to the Forum, where appropriate, to assist with discussions on specific agenda items, as invited by the host State, on a case by case basis and with consultation with the small Forum support team.

Objectives of the Forum

2.18 The two key objectives of the establishment of the Forum would be to:

- a) consider and refine aviation issues based on previous discussions, including those from the Conference on common interest and importance to the APAC region and any of ICAO's strategic objectives (such as facilitation and economic development); and
- b) agree on establishing APAC regional aviation positions for collective advancement and representation that have merit in being promoted at ICAO's global meetings (and potentially at other international and regional organisation events).

Review of ToR

2.19 The ToR will be reviewed every three years to ensure that they continue to be effective and reflect experience and lessons learnt from the Forum's initial three years of operations.

Initial Forum Meeting

2.20 The initial Forum Meeting is proposed to be held as a side session during the 62nd DGCA Conference in 2027. The timing of the session will be determined in consultation with the DGCA host, with the meeting tentatively planned for a duration of no more than ninety minutes. The primary deliverable of the inaugural Forum Meeting would be agreement on the development and presentation of one or two working papers for the 43rd ICAO Assembly in 2028, for co-sponsorship by Asia Pacific ICAO Member States.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The proposed Terms of Reference provide a practical, proportionate and low-cost framework for establishing an Asia Pacific Regional Aviation Forum that complements existing ICAO regional arrangements without creating unnecessary institutional structures.

3.2 By providing a dedicated mechanism for APAC Member States to develop coordinated regional positions for consideration at global ICAO meetings, the Forum would strengthen the region's collective contribution to international aviation policy while preserving the complementary roles of the DGCA Conference and other existing regional mechanisms.

3.3 The proposed operational arrangements build on the existing DGCA Conference framework, minimise additional administrative burden, and enable the Forum to be implemented in a practical and scalable manner.

4. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

4.1 The Conference is invited to:

- a) agree to establish the Asia Pacific Regional Aviation Forum (APRAF) as a voluntary regional mechanism to complement existing ICAO regional cooperation arrangements;

- b) endorse the proposed Terms of Reference and operational arrangements for APRAF, as set out in this paper;
- c) agree to establish a small voluntary Forum support team, comprising representatives from Asia Pacific States, to perform the functions outlined in the above Terms of Reference; and
- d) agree that the inaugural APRAF Meeting be held as a side session during the 62nd DGCA Conference in 2027, with the objective of developing one or two coordinated APAC working papers for consideration at the 43rd ICAO Assembly in 2028.

— END —

ATTACHMENT A: Key Elements of the DGCA Conference and Asia Pacific Regional Aviation Forum (APRAF)

<i>Element</i>	DGCA Conference	Asia Pacific Regional Aviation Forum (APRAF)
<i>Primary Role</i>	APAC and invited states and industry discussion of, and information and experience sharing in, the delivery by APAC States and industry against ICAO's strategic objectives and SARPs.	Dedicated APAC State forum for consolidation and agreeing on regional positions that can then be presented to influence future global aviation decision making.
<i>Other Roles</i>	Encouraging APAC regional coordination and cooperation in progressing APAC declarations and implementation of ICAO SARPs and strategic objectives	Opportunity for discussion of issues on international aviation issues less related to current ICAO priorities or work streams, potentially to form regional positions that can be presented at global forums.
<i>Meeting Outcomes</i>	Action Items for recommendation/consideration by APAC States, ICAO APAC Regional Office and industry in the region	Agreed APAC regional positions and coordinated submissions to be presented to global aviation forums (e.g. Working Papers to the ICAO Assembly)
<i>Participation</i>	Broad participation including APAC and other States, international organisations and industry	APAC States/Administrations, with invited participants as appropriate.
<i>Relationship with ICAO Processes</i>	Supports APAC awareness, understanding and promotes implementation of ICAO outcomes and priorities	Directly contributes to ICAO consideration of issues through presenting APAC regional positions.
<i>Meeting Modality</i>	Stand-alone five-day annual conference	Side session within the five-day DGCA Conference
<i>Administrative Arrangements</i>	Undertaken by the ICAO APAC Regional Office with support by DGCA small team	Undertaken by small voluntary Forum team from APAC States (working with DGCA hosts on meeting governance/logistics)
<i>Practicality / Resource Implications</i>	Existing mechanism (no additional structure required)	Minimal additional cost; leverages DGCA participation, governance and logistics