Address by the President of the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), Mr. Roberto Kobeh González, to the 46th Conference of Directors General of Civil Aviation, Asia and Pacific Regions

(Osaka, Japan – 12 October 2009)

It is a pleasure for me to join all of you for this 46th DGCA Conference. I sincerely thank the Government of Japan and the Japanese Civil Aviation Bureau for hosting this important annual event. It provides us with an opportunity to visit your country at a time of landmark changes in the national political landscape.

It was encouraging to hear from the new Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism that the tourism, maritime and air transport sectors are those most likely to grow in the coming years. In terms of aviation, Japan is strategically positioned to facilitate international traffic flow between North America and Southeast Asia and it manages a large area of the North Pacific airspace. It also operates the MTSAT satellite to cover the wide area from India to the west to Hawaii to the east and contributes actively to aviation growth in this part of the world, notably through the provision of technical assistance in the Region.

We applaud and earnestly look forward to a continuation of these policies, not only for the Region but for the international community at large.

The theme you have chosen for this year's conference – *Seamless Sky: Bringing Together the Asia/Pacific Regions* – is timely. There is no doubt that a seamless sky is fundamental to the safe and orderly growth of air transport in the Asia and Pacific Regions, as it is in all other regions.

What do we understand by seamless sky? One way to visualize the concept is to look at it from the point of view of airline operators. What they need is for their aircraft to operate at all times along their preferred trajectories in terms of time, speed, as well as vertical and horizontal positioning.

Underlying these requirements is optimum fuel burn, for economic and environmental considerations, as well as scheduling, gate availability and having the right airplane at the right location. These operating parameters are much more achievable with an 'optimized' air navigation environment, not only in a region but worldwide. A flight from Osaka must be able to count on the same level and efficiency of air traffic management (ATM) systems and facilities in any airspace.

That is the vision. A truly global seamless system where every regional system is fully integrated into the whole. Turning the vision into reality requires a holistic approach and that, in turn, involves wider planning perspectives, implementation of facilities and services over larger geographical areas and a global framework for performance measurement.

ICAO's efforts towards the realization of this vision is reflected in the Global Air Traffic Management Operational Concept. The Operational Concept describes an optimal ATM system as one which achieves interoperability and seamlessness across all regions for all users during all phases of flight, and one that meets agreed levels of safety, provides for optimum economic operations, is environmentally sustainable and meets national security requirements.

The planning process for moving from concept to operations is the Global Air Navigation Plan. To assist States and regional planning groups identify the most appropriate operational improvements and to support implementation, ICAO recently revised the Plan. It now clearly describes a strategy aimed at achieving near-and medium-term ATM benefits on the basis of available and foreseeable aircraft capabilities and ATM infrastructure.

Planning will be focused on specific performance objectives supported by a set of Global Plan Initiatives, with a view to maintaining consistent global harmonization and improving implementation.

To further promote the universality and interoperability of ATM systems, ICAO has invited all concerned stakeholders to a roundtable meeting in Montreal on 22 and 23 October. The intention is to promote integration of all efforts worldwide so that any improvements that are envisaged in future ATM systems are shared and available to the world aviation community globally. The purpose of the meeting is also to acknowledge the work already being done and to establish, in a rational and coordinated manner, which stakeholder is best positioned to assume responsibility for various aspects of the future work involved.

I look forward for States from the Asia/Pacific Region to take an active part in the discussions and to support ICAO in promoting global ATM harmonization. Coordination and cooperation are essential for ICAO to effectively play its role of defining unified technical standards and specifications, and of publishing practical documents and guidance material for implementation. The results of this roundtable will be made available to all in due course.

All that I have mentioned up to this point is perfectly in line with conclusions of the 36th Session of the ICAO Assembly with respect to ATM which called on the Organization to continue its leadership role in the planning and implementation of a performance-based, global ATM system. Of the many issues discussed and agreements reached at the Assembly, a few stand out as particularly supportive to ATM global objectives.

One is the emphasis placed on ensuring that all initiatives are carried out under the Global Air Navigation Plan, as is the case for the European Community Single European Sky ATM Research (SESAR) programme and the United States Next Generation Air Transport System (NextGen). Both programmes recognize the importance of ICAO's Operational Concept and the Global Air Navigation Plan as effective tools to guide the global effort and to serve as the framework for continued improvements.

The alignment of these two systems with the two ICAO documents will lead to reinforcement of a common global framework to achieve interoperability and harmonization. Already, development of standards based on these two systems has led to much progress towards the realization of the Operational Concept. The result is that the work thus far can accommodate any new initiatives that might be proposed to respond to local or regional needs.

The Assembly also agreed on the need for commitment among all members of the ATM community toward achieving shared goals, adding that collaborative decision-making at all levels in the planning process would serve as an important tool for continued improvements to the global ATM system. ICAO, through the Asia/Pacific Office located in Bangkok, can also play a critical coordinating role in bringing all parties together in the process, by removing impediments from the system in a coordinated manner. I would also encourage this work to be carried out within the successful APANPIRG mechanism.

In short, a seamless sky for the Asia and Pacific Regions rests on cooperation. We need political will from all partners to work closely together in the creation of a truly global, seamless and interoperable air navigation system that responds to the needs of regulators and operators in all regions, in a globally-harmonized manner.

With your permission, I would like to offer a few additional thoughts on agenda items of your meeting, primarily to highlight other upcoming ICAO events that might help to build on the results of your conference.

One is a unique Global Air Traffic Management Forum on Civil/Military Cooperation planned for next week in Montreal. The purpose of the forum is to explore ways to improve civil/military cooperation and coordination in support of optimum use of airspace by all users, to effectively meet operational requirements of air transportation, national defence and environmental protection. The deliberations will hopefully lead to greater understanding of common requirements and operating needs of the two prime airspace users as we collectively move toward a more interoperable and seamless Global Air Navigation System.

Another important meeting is the High-level Conference on Safety to be held in Montreal in March of next year. You may recall that the last safety conference held in March 2006 produced laudable results for improving safety around the world, most notably by promoting transparency in the results of safety audits carried out by ICAO. The sharing of information will again be high on the agenda of the next Conference, along with the evolution of the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme, the ICAO safety framework and the transition to a State Safety Programme.

In the area of security, work is ongoing in the development of an ICAO Comprehensive Aviation Security Strategy (ICASS). Discussions will be held in Singapore on the subject on 21 and 22 October. I encourage you to closely follow progress in this area as it will lay the foundation for our policies and activities in the coming years. I take this opportunity to also remind States that the deadline for the issuance of Machine Readable Passports is April 2010.

In closing, I bring good news from Montreal. Just a few days ago, the High-level Meeting on International Aviation and Climate Change held at ICAO approved a Declaration affirming their commitment to aviation emissions that contribute to climate change, by working through ICAO and in cooperation with the industry. Proposed measures contained in the Declaration build on a Programme of Action adopted by the Council in June, which represented the first globally-harmonized agreement to address climate change from a sector. The Declaration will also form the basis for input by ICAO to discussions on international aviation at the upcoming 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen next December.

Ladies and gentlemen, whether we are talking about seamless skies or any other aspect of international civil aviation, the key to success and progress is cooperation. Let this be the guiding principle on which this conference unfolds.