



**Keynote speech by
the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Toshiyuki Onuma,
to the ACI APAC & MID
Regional Assembly, Conference & Exhibition (RACE) 2026**

(Pre-recorded message, Bangkok, Thailand, 13 May 2026)

Distinguished colleagues,

It is a great pleasure to address ACI's Asia-Pacific and Middle East Regional Assembly, Conference and Exhibition.

I regret that I am unable to join you in person but hope to do so in the near future.

I would like to thank ACI for convening this important gathering, and for its continued leadership in advancing the role of airports across one of the most dynamic aviation regions in the world.

This year's timely theme, "Airports as engines of shared prosperity", speaks to the evolving role of aviation in our societies.

Air connectivity remains central to socio-economic development. It enables the movement of people and goods, facilitates trade and tourism, and connects communities to education, healthcare, and global markets.

For many States, particularly developing countries, Small Island Developing States, and landlocked regions, air transport is essential.

Airports sit at the heart of this system. Their development and modernization are crucial to unlocking the full benefits of connectivity. Through policies, guidance, and tools, ICAO supports States in strengthening airport planning, economic regulation, and financing frameworks.

At the same time, shared prosperity must be sustainable. Aviation's long-term growth depends on our collective ability to balance economic, environmental, and social priorities.

From enabling sustainable aviation fuel supply chains to improving ground operations and efficiency, airports are key to achieving ICAO's aspirational goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Progress is already under way.

Today, more than 185 airports are supplying sustainable aviation fuels.

Digital transformation is also reshaping the airport experience and operational landscape.

Through initiatives such as ICAO's Traveller Identification Programme, we are advancing solutions that enhance both efficiency and security. Around the world, airports are adopting self-service kiosks and automated border-control systems.

Innovations such as Digital Travel Credentials and digitally signed travel documents will further transform the passenger journey, enabling seamless, secure processing even before travellers arrive at the airport.

However, technology alone will not deliver transformation.

Workforce development will be a defining factor in the success of airport modernization. The workforce of tomorrow must be equipped to operate across digital systems, manage complex processes, and deliver high-quality service.

In parallel, resilience has emerged as a critical priority.

In this context, ICAO plays a key role in supporting stability. Through globally harmonized standards and frameworks, we help ensure that airport operations remain safe, secure, and efficient.

We also support resilience through enhanced information-sharing, capacity-building, and implementation assistance, enabling States and industry partners to respond to emerging challenges while maintaining connectivity.

Airports truly are engines of shared prosperity. Their full potential can only be realized through collaboration.

Member States, international organizations, airport operators and airlines must work together to align policies, mobilize investment, and share knowledge.

For its part, ICAO remains committed to supporting this collective effort, guided by our "No Country Left Behind" strategic goal, which ensures that all States can benefit from aviation's development.

Thank you once again to ACI, and to all partners for your continued cooperation.

I wish you a successful and impactful Assembly, and I look forward to the outcomes of your discussions.

Thank you.