



ICAO

**Remarks by
the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Toshiyuki Onuma,
to the 2026 Regional Air Transport Conference**

(Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 21 August 2026)

*Dear Director General of Civil Aviation of Romania,
Dear Governor of Cluj County Council,
Dear Mayor of Cluj Napoca,
Dear Vice-President of Cluj County Council,
Dear Director General of Cluj Napoca airport,
Dear Director General of Hermes,
Distinguished representatives,
Dear Colleagues,*

I want to begin by expressing my gratitude to Governor, Maria Forna, Mayor Emil Boc and Vice-President of Cluj County Council, Vakar Istvan, for welcoming all of us here to Cluj-Napoca.

I would like to extend my appreciation to Director General Nicolae Stoica, of the Romanian Civil Aeronautical Authority, whose leadership continues to support the advancement of civil aviation in Romania.

My sincere appreciation also goes to Mr. David Ciceo, General Manager of Cluj International Airport for the generous welcome and hospitality.

Finally, I wish to thank Dr. Kostas Iatrou for bringing us together as committed aviation leaders and experts, and for this highly appreciated opportunity to address you.

It is a great pleasure to be with you here in Cluj-Napoca. International civil aviation continues to be the safest and most reliable mode of transportation to connect the world. It has proven to be essential for people, economies, and global connectivity.

ICAO stands at a pivotal moment, to lead aviation into a safe, secure, and sustainable future anchored in inclusiveness and global participation. I am committed to strengthening our core responsibilities and advancing aviation in full alignment with ICAO's shared strategic goals.

Climate change, conflicts and geopolitical uncertainty, as well as growing demands for global connectivity are among the factors that are testing the resilience of our institutions.

This is why both deepening and broadening our collaboration is increasingly important.

Our collaboration will also shape the progress of aviation at the global level as innovation rapidly transforms our sector.

Advanced automation, artificial intelligence, and increasingly connected systems are delivering significant benefits to States, operators, and passengers alike. However, as we connect more people and technologies than ever before, the complexity of our airspace is increasing.

New risks—such as interference with satellite navigation, lithium battery fires, and evolving cyber threats—transcend national borders, underscoring our shared vulnerabilities.

These developments highlight the critical importance of renewing our global commitment to aviation safety and security.

The aviation community has consistently set ambitious goals and achieved them through close cooperation.

This spirit is reflected in ICAO's vision for 2050: air transport for all, with zero fatalities and net-zero carbon emissions.

This year, we launch our new strategic plan to guide us towards that vision.

Already, many countries and regions have made impressive gains in safety and security oversight, supported by investment in institutions, skilled professionals, and stronger regulations.

ICAO oversight audits confirm that an increasing number of States are achieving implementation scores above the global average, and the global accident rate continues to decline.

However, recent data show troubling increases in certain types of accidents and fatalities, especially those involving runway safety, turbulence, and mid-air collisions. These trends remind us that our work is far from finished.

Trust in international air transport depends on effective oversight, well-trained professionals, and strong institutions committed to global standards.

Prompt, transparent investigations into civil aviation accidents, and timely sharing of their findings, are also essential for preventing future incidents and upholding public trust.

ICAO will continue providing standards, training, and capacity-building support to help Member States meet these goals, ensuring that no country is left behind as we work to proactively manage emerging risks and seize the opportunities of transformation. We must also heighten collaboration on national and ICAO global safety and security plans and programmes to achieve further progress.

I also want to take this opportunity to underscore the importance of our continued cooperation on aviation environmental protection.

CORSIA remains the only globally harmonized market-based measure applying to CO₂ emissions from international aviation.

I encourage European States to continue their strong support for CORSIA and to work with ICAO to advance aviation decarbonization through cooperation, multilateralism and globally

harmonized solutions. Together we will accelerate progress towards achieving net-zero carbon emissions from international aviation, in line with our vision for 2050.

Colleagues,

I want to highlight the opportunity presented by the upcoming ICAO Worldwide Air Transport Conference in November.

It is a once-in-a-decade opportunity to redefine and strengthen the global economic framework that sustains the commercial vitality of international civil aviation.

The success of these talks, and the international frameworks they will define, depends in large part on how well regional perspectives are represented.

I want to encourage the States in this region to begin preparing your national and shared positions for these talks.

Europe must help shape the next decade of global economic policy for air transport.

Discussions at the Conference will proceed under the theme of “Air Transport: Powering Global Connectivity, Economic Development and Resilience in a Dynamic World.”

This signals the critical role our industry plays in jobs, trade, and building stronger communities, increasingly recognized at the highest levels.

Aviation supports approximately USD 4.1 trillion in economic activity and around 86.5 million jobs worldwide.

We must expand this contribution by getting the global policies right.

We have planned the conference to help you work together and find agreement on key issues.

The objective is not only to present ideas, but to foster dialogue, encourage the exchange of perspectives, and create opportunities for meaningful engagement among all participants.

The Conference will deliver two key outcomes that will shape the future of our sector.

The first is the Conference Report.

It will capture recommendations to guide the development of international air transport over the next decade.

The second is the Ministerial Declaration.

It is an opportunity for governments around the world to express a shared vision and demonstrate their collective commitment to the Conference's objectives.

In preparation for these discussions, the ICAO Council has developed a draft Declaration and approved its release for consultation with Member States. This gives all States an opportunity to help shape the final text and ensure it reflects our common priorities and ambitions.

I also want to share that ICAO is working with ACI to host a Global Infrastructure Investor Forum the day before the conference.

The Forum will inform the Conference discussions on how to ensure aviation infrastructure meets the need for a safe, sustainable, and rapidly expanding global air transport network.

The Forum will identify specific actions for ICAO, ACI, governments, financial institutions, investors and industry stakeholders in this effort.

It will also identify financing mechanisms and ways to support them, strengthen collaboration on investment and long-term financing.

Colleagues,

The success of this Regional Air Transport Conference will be determined by your active participation.

As I emphasized earlier, your insights are vital to meeting today's challenges and shaping the future of international aviation.

I encourage you to engage fully in the discussions and use this opportunity to strengthen partnerships and advance progress towards the ICAO vision for 2050, throughout this region and beyond.

Thank you.