



ICAO

**Opening keynote by  
the Council President of the  
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)  
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,  
to the 59th DGCA Conference**

*(Cebu, Philippines, 14 October 2024)*

*H.E. Jaime Bautisa, Secretary, Department of Transportation,  
Mr. Manuel Antonio L. Tamayo, Director General of the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines,  
Distinguished Directors General of Civil Aviation,  
ICAO Council Representatives,  
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Distinguished delegates,*

I wish to begin by thanking the Government and Civil Aviation Authority of Philippines for hosting this 59th Asia Pacific DGAC Conference here in the wonderful city of Cebu.

I had the opportunity to meet many of you just one month ago in New Delhi at the 2nd Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference, and presumably I will meet some of you again next week in Kuala Lumpur at ICAO's Air Services Negotiation Event – ICAN 2024. My presence here in the Region, together with the presence of the ICAO Secretary General, demonstrates the importance ICAO places on aviation development in Asia-Pacific.

In fact, as we gather here in Cebu, we must acknowledge that aviation is at a crossroads in this Region. The aviation sector is poised for remarkable growth while at the same time faces complex challenges that demand our immediate attention.

The Asia Pacific region, representing one-third of global traffic and covering 49 Flight Information Regions, is set to benefit the most from this growth. ICAO projects that it will become the world's fastest growing market at a time when air transport is navigating the aftermath of global disruptions, adapting to new technologies, and striving to meet ambitious environmental goals.

We meet just weeks after the landmark adoption of the Asia and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Civil Aviation in Delhi. This declaration, along with the region's projected growth, underscores the critical need for action. Indeed, your actions will contribute to the sustainable development of aviation in Asia and the Pacific for years to come.

In fact, we are all aware of the crucial role air transport plays as a catalyst for prosperity. Let me remind you that for some States, aviation and tourism contribute up to 40% of the national GDP. Many island States and landlocked States depend heavily on air transport to connect to the wider world.

As I mentioned at the Ministerial Conference in New Delhi, our utmost important priority is safety. Unfortunately, the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme results reveal the need for improvement in the Asia Pacific Region. That is, whilst, some States have reached excellent results, many others have serious challenges.

In fact, the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme shows that the Asia Pacific region's average Effective Implementation Score is 65.48%, which is below the global average of 69.68%.

This is particularly concerning given the region's rapid aviation growth. The disparity between the pace of traffic increase and the development of robust safety oversight systems in some States requires careful attention. Addressing this gap is urgent and requires collaborative efforts from all stakeholders to ensure that safety measures keep pace with the region's expanding aviation sector.

The second priority for this Region is to address the traffic growth in the coming decades with consequential enhancement of airspace capacity.

The implementation of the Asia Pacific Seamless Air Navigation Services plan is pivotal for the region's future. This plan is designed to boost Air Traffic Management capacity and significantly foster harmonization. However, progress has been slower than anticipated. We must accelerate our efforts to fully realize the benefits of this crucial initiative.

Additionally, civil-military cooperation in the Asia Pacific region must improve. Currently, levels fall short of what is needed. Airspace is a limited resource, and better collaboration between civil and military operations is essential for optimal use and for a more efficient air traffic management system. I urge all member States to initiate or strengthen dialogue between civil and military authorities to enhance this crucial cooperation.

There is also a challenge in the slow progress of Aeronautical Information Management implementation. This slow progress is not just a concern. It poses potential safety risks. We must redouble our efforts to improve these figures and ensure the accuracy and reliability of our aeronautical information.

Progress towards the Global Aviation Safety Plan goals is closely linked to addressing the Asia Pacific region's challenges in aeronautical information.

With regard to security, the Universal Security Audit Programme reveals challenges similar to safety for the region. The average Effective Implementation Score here is 65%, compared to the global average of 72%. Moreover, only about one-third of States in this area currently meet the Global Aviation Security Plan target of at least 75% effective implementation of the Critical Elements of a State's Security Oversight System. Also, in this domain there is a need for close cooperation amongst Asia Pacific States in order to make effective progress.

As we perfectly know, a safe and secure air traffic growth must be sustainable pursuing the Long-Term Aspirational Goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

In this regard, I am particularly encouraged by the engagement and by the commitment of many States in the Region. Several have adopted ambitious mandates on SAF uptake. Some initiatives have already been undertaken regarding Sustainable Aviation Fuel infrastructure development and production.

I am also pleased to highlight that 24 States, representing 83% of those with applicable airplane operators, have submitted the required information regarding CO<sub>2</sub> emissions under CORSIA. Additionally, 25 States have voluntarily joined CORSIA. Furthermore, 22 States have submitted State Action Plans. These numbers reflect, as I mentioned just a few moments ago, a growing commitment to environmental sustainability in the region.

I wish to also mention that I am delighted by the recent opening of the ICAO Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) Liaison Office. This office, generously hosted by the Government of Fiji, was officially opened in August 2024. It serves several important functions. First, it aims to improve engagement between PSIDS and ICAO. Additionally, it supports the implementation of ICAO standards and regional plans. Finally, the office assists in implementing outcomes from Ministerial Conferences. This new presence will enhance our ability to address the unique aviation challenges faced by Pacific Island States. I want to express our sincere gratitude to Fiji, as well as to Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, the United States of America, and Saudi Arabia for their generous contributions and support.

This exemplary cooperation offers valuable lessons. I encourage you to consider how it could inspire us to go even further.

As all the priorities are interconnected and form the foundation of a robust and sustainable aviation system in general and for the Asia Pacific region in particular, I wish to mention two further challenges to be addressed in the Region.

The first is the establishment of Independent Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation Authorities. This remains a critical priority as also stressed by IATA at the Ministerial Conference in New Delhi. Currently, only 40% of APAC States have such authorities. I strongly urge the remaining States to establish these bodies or consider delegating these responsibilities to regional organizations. Effective and independent investigations are key to continuously improving our safety standards.

Lastly, we must increase participation in international air law treaties. Some APAC States have yet to ratify a number of crucial agreements, including the Protocols to amend the Chicago Convention by increasing the membership of our Council and Air Navigation Commission. I urge all member States to review their status and take steps towards full participation.

Before closing, I wish to recall that this year we mark the 80th anniversary of the Chicago Convention. For eight decades, its principles have guided international civil aviation. You have been invited to participate in the celebrations that will be held in Chicago on 5th December in the very same hall where the Chicago Convention was signed 80 years ago.

It is our intention not only to celebrate on that occasion our past achievements but also, and let me say, more importantly, to discuss and shape global aviation's future. For this reason the ICAO Council is going to adopt in just a few weeks the ICAO Strategic Plan 2026-2050. The ICAO Secretary General will make a presentation of the Strategic Plan in a few moments.

Concluding, I call upon each of you to approach the coming days with a renewed commitment to addressing these priorities. As we engage in discussions and negotiations this week, let us remain focused on the challenges at hand. Together, we can develop concrete strategies to overcome these obstacles and implement the vision of the Delhi Declaration. Through collaborative action, aviation will continue to drive sustainable development, focusing on the needs of this diverse and dynamic region.

This conference provides us a valuable opportunity to collaborate, share insights, and forge a path forward. Let's make the most of our time here in Cebu to lay the groundwork for a stronger, safer, and more efficient aviation sector in Asia Pacific.

Thank you.