



**Opening Remarks by
the Council President of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,
to the 2nd Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Civil Aviation 2024**

*(Day 1 – Commencement of the Conference
11 September 2024, New Delhi, India)*

*Honorable Minister of Civil Aviation,
Shri Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu,
Honorable Ministers and Representatives from Asia Pacific States,
Permanent Secretary,
Shri Vumlunmang Vualnam,
Ambassadors,
High Commissioners,
Dear ICAO Council Representatives,
Distinguished Delegates,
Namaste.*

I am deeply grateful to the Indian Government for the organization, in close cooperation with the ICAO Asia Pacific Regional Office in Bangkok, of this 2nd Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Civil Aviation, at a crucial time in aviation's history.

A crucial time marked, in this post pandemic era, by new challenges to the sustainable development of air transport worldwide, and particularly in the Asia-Pacific Region.

This year we mark the 80th anniversary of the Chicago Convention. For eight decades, its principles have guided international civil aviation. This milestone not only celebrates our past achievements but also highlights how important our current discussions are in shaping global aviation's future.

The Asia Pacific region, home to the world's largest population and covering 49 Flight Information Regions, has long led aviation growth and represents 32% of global traffic. This significant share, combined with the region's economic projections and demographic trends, highlights its immense potential. Given the persisting global development imbalance and air transport's ability to act as a catalyst for change, we have both an opportunity and a responsibility to further develop aviation in this region.

The Asia Pacific aviation sector has demonstrated remarkable resilience and progress in recent years. Despite facing unprecedented challenges of a global pandemic, the region has emerged stronger and more adaptable. By late 2023, most air routes in Asia Pacific had not only recovered but exceeded pre-pandemic levels. In fact, early 2024 saw passenger traffic in the region 2% above 2019

figures. More interestingly, this Region is projected to have a 9% growth rate per year over the next 5 years while the world average growth rate will be approximately 6.1%.

The resilience of the Asia Pacific aviation sector is further evidenced by the certification of 92% of the region's international aerodromes. This is testament to the region's strong commitment to safety and efficiency. While these achievements are commendable, the sector still faces significant challenges that require our attention.

The Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme results reveal a significant challenge in the Asia Pacific region. As of March 2024, 19 out of 37 audited States in the region were below the global average in implementing ICAO Standards. This is particularly crucial 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 our 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.

Another critical challenge we have to face over the next two-three decades is the climate emergency.

During the 41st ICAO Assembly, you will recall that ICAO States took the historical decision to adopt a long term global aspirational goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, commonly referred to as the LTAG.

A massive leap forward has been achieved at the Third ICAO Conference on Aviation and Alternative Fuels (CAAF/3) in November last year in Dubai just ahead COP28, with the adoption of a Global Framework for SAF and LCAF development and deployment. In particular, I wish to recall the global target to achieve of 5% CO₂ emissions reduction by 2030.

Now, we must deliver.

In this regard, I am so pleased to learn about the so many initiatives regarding SAF production undertaken by several Countries in this region starting of course from India. For Example, just one year ago India, in its capacity of G20 Chair, announced the Global Biofuel Alliance initiative.

But I wish to commend the many other Countries in the Region that have started or have announced SAF production or have adopted regulatory framework for SAF deployment.

I wish to ensure you all that ICAO is committed to supporting the implementation of the Global Framework, forging ahead through partnerships while ensuring that *No Country is Left Behind*.

Innovation and new technologies, such as drones and commercial space operations, to name but a few, will offer great opportunities but will also bring new concerns as cybersecurity threats. As we address these challenges together, we should view them not only as hurdles to overcome but as opportunities for sustainable growth, and increased regional cooperation.

That is why the Delhi Declaration created here must be more than a document – it must be a commitment. A commitment to improving safety oversight, accelerating sustainable practices, and fostering innovation across this diverse region. It will guide the region towards a safe, efficient, and sustainable aviation system that serves all nations and peoples in Asia Pacific.

As ICAO Council President, I assure you of our full support in these efforts.

Distinguished Ministers, the decisions made over these two days will impact far beyond the Asia Pacific region, shaping global aviation's future. I urge each of you to bring your best expertise, boldest vision, and deepest commitment to these discussions.

The Asia Pacific region has the opportunity to set new benchmarks in aviation safety, efficiency, and sustainability. Through collaborative efforts, the region can foster an aviation future that drives economic growth and connects people and leads the way in addressing global challenges. The decisions made here can serve as a model for the entire aviation community, showcasing how regional cooperation can have a truly global impact.

Thank you. I look forward to interesting and productive discussions ahead.