

**55<sup>th</sup> CONFERENCE OF  
DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION  
ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONS**

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AGENDA ITEM 8:        TECHNICAL AND REGIONAL  
                                 COOPERATION

**INCREASED PRIORITY GIVEN TO ICAO FOCUS AND  
RESOURCING IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION**

Presented by Australia

**SUMMARY**

This paper discusses the challenges and resource constraints faced by the Asia Pacific Region and calls for ICAO to undertake greater engagement with all States in the region.

Action: The Conference is invited to:

- a) Support the region in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and progress towards ICAO global targets;
- b) Note that out of the Air Navigation Conference, Australia and co-sponsors requested that at the next Assembly, ICAO strengthens ongoing engagement with the Asia Pacific Region and increase its budget for the Asia Pacific Regional Office.

## **INCREASED PRIORITY GIVEN TO ICAO FOCUS AND RESOURCING IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The Asia and Pacific Region (APAC) has become the world's largest aviation region in terms of available seat-kilometres, generates the world's second largest share of international revenue passenger-kilometres, and is poised to become the world's largest air traffic market by 2022. This region continues to manage the second largest market share of international traffic with its overall air transport sector employing over 30 million people and contributing more than \$620 billion in regional gross domestic product.

1.2 This growth, as predicted by IATA and aircraft manufacturers, puts additional pressure on aviation infrastructure, regulatory systems and safety oversight to maintain current aviation standards. There is a compelling need for greater regional cooperation, partnerships and engagement to continuously improve aviation safety, and enhance safety and efficiency of air navigation services to cater for the projected air traffic growth in the region.

1.3 There are various ICAO programmes, objectives and targets currently being pursued under the "No Country Left Behind" (NCLB) initiative to assist States in capacity development. While the aviation industry in the Region is growing at an unprecedented rate, the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) and reviews by other international bodies indicate that several States in the region have not yet been able to establish a satisfactory national safety oversight system.

1.4 USOAP's Effective Implementation (EI) Scores, which measures a State's capacity and civil aviation development, demonstrate that States in the APAC Region have both some of the highest and lowest State EI Scores existing within the Region. The Beijing Declaration calls for States to achieve EI scores equal or higher than the global average, which is around 65%, by 2022. There is a greater need for stronger regional cooperation, partnerships and engagement. Currently, 20 States are sitting below the global target of 65% as set out in the Global Aviation Safety Plan.

1.5 The Beijing Declaration of Civil Aviation Ministers, made at the inaugural Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Civil Aviation in February 2018, established a commitment to implementation goals of new safety targets and priorities for the APAC region.

1.6 The Beijing Declaration aims to improve aviation safety by committing APAC Member States to implement an effective State Safety Program (SSP) by 2025. While this provides a few years for States to implement SSPs, States have to meet a minimum threshold of the global average EI score before developing an SSP. With some Pacific Island Countries starting with an EI of as low as 5%, there are significant challenges in meeting this target. With respect to air navigation services, Member States have committed to implementation of the Asia Pacific Seamless Air Traffic Management (ATM) Plan to enhance ATM capacity and harmonization in the Region.

1.7 While regional progress has been made, significant challenges exist for States in this region in reaching the Beijing Declaration goals. Procedures and technologies are inconsistent between States who require additional support, and investment must be provided to implement these commitments in one of the most culturally, politically, and socially diverse regions in the world.

### **2. THE ASIA PACIFIC ENVIRONMENT**

2.1 Aviation is an industry of strategic importance to all Asia Pacific economies. With over 30% of global traffic and more growth to come, this geographically large and economically diverse region plays a significant role in shaping and contributing to the international aviation system.

2.2 Regional harmonization of standards is challenging. The APAC Region includes States from Afghanistan to Kiribati from the west to the east and Mongolia to New Zealand from the north to the south, across half the world's time zones. The ICAO Asia and Pacific (APAC) Regional Office in Bangkok, which has a key guidance and coordination role, are increasingly under-resourced while managing 39 contracting States and maintaining liaison with two Special Administrative Regions of China and 13 other territories. This is the second largest number of contracting States, behind the European and North Atlantic ICAO Regional Office, and significantly more than other Regional Offices.

2.3 This immense distance is compounded with limited connectivity, particularly in the Pacific States, affecting the ability of ICAO staff to connect with the region. This geographical spread limits the ability of Regional States to attend events through both cost of travel and time lost in travelling to attend meetings. Civil aviation has the capacity to connect geographically distant island States in the Pacific region and, consequently, is an essential enabler for economic development in the Region. With a large number of developing States, including Small Island Developing States (SIDS), this provides additional challenges in sharing best practice, cooperation and collaboration in pursuit of ICAO's global goals.

2.4 Recent examples include the Regional Aviation Safety Group meeting held in Thailand in September 2018, which only 19 of 39 APAC contracting States attended. The Asia Pacific Air Navigation Planning and Implementation Regional Group (APAN PIRG) held in September 2018 was attended by 26 of 39 APAC states. Seven states could not attend the APAC Director Generals of Civil Aviation Conference, held in Mongolia in August 2017, and these were largely SIDS.

2.5 Funding for staff at the ICAO Regional Office in Bangkok, in particular the APAC travel budget, is somewhat under-represented and under-resourced to deliver on ICAO goals for improving aviation standards, as compared to other Regional Offices. This could be attributed to the challenge and expense of engaging with States on NCLB capacity building initiatives which aims to work with States that are below the global average to implement aviation standards and programs in a region which is geographically diverse and where flights to some States only occur on particular days.

2.6 As a consequence, Secretariat support for regional mechanisms is limited. This impedes the flow of benefits through reporting and information sharing and, reduces the ability of the Regional Office to maintain close relationships with all States, including operational awareness. This impacts on their ability to provide specific guidance and support to a State on ICAO compliance programmes including USOAP and the Universal Security Audit Programme (USAP).

2.7 The region is further disadvantaged through routine distribution of programs and events by ICAO Headquarters. Equal distribution of activities such as USOAP audits and assessments disadvantage the Asia Pacific region as it is spread between comparatively more States than other ICAO regions. Further, as noted above, training or information sessions which are limited to a per region basis, will inherently disadvantage Asia Pacific States due to travel distances and those State's ability to meet the cost of travel. As such, consideration should be given to allocating events and training which acknowledge the distances.

2.8 It is important to note that the Bangkok Regional Office also conducts a range of technical assistance activities for capability and capacity which includes: Combined Action Team (CAT) Missions, Missions that are under the Regular Programme budget, and Missions on cost recovery. However, it has been increasingly difficult to provide assistance to State and sustaining CAT missions. Deeper and more frequent engagement by ICAO will need to occur for the Region to meet the Beijing Declaration's commitment to obtain EI Scores that are higher or equal to the current global average by 2022.

### **3. OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT PRESENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION**

3.1 Discussions at previous DGCA Conferences, and analysis of ICAO reports and statistics indicate that there are a number of opportunities to enhance State and Regional outcomes in the Asia Pacific. At the recent meeting of the Regional Cooperation Mechanism Task Force, the Regional Director noted that it was important to examine whether various regional initiatives could better support the commitments in the Beijing Declaration. To achieve this, the Taskforce suggested that the Regional Office should develop a survey to identify common and evolving needs of the Region and identify funding sources to build on the activities within the Region to assist States that require further targeted assistance.

3.2 At the 2018 meetings of APAN PIRG and RASG, it was agreed that there should be efforts to restructure and harmonise the groups' working mechanisms to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the groups. Both PIRGs and RASGs have established regional priorities, implementation indicators and targets in aviation safety and air navigation for the regional implementation of the Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP) and the Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP). Noting the commonalities of the priorities and work programs of PIRGs and RASG, increased resourcing and support from ICAO would harmonize the groups' work programs, increasing efficiency and avoid overlap of activities; improve reporting by the groups to the ICAO Headquarters; and better monitoring for assessing the groups' efforts in reaching their established goals and targets.

3.3 Another initiative is increased engagement with the Pacific Small Island Developing States' (PSIDS) on their aviation needs. At the 39<sup>th</sup> Assembly of ICAO, the Assembly supported a study to determine the challenges and needs of SIDS with respect to aviation safety, air navigation and aviation security. In support of the development of further solutions, contributions have been sought in both funding and in-kind support for the progress of this study.

### **4. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE**

4.1 The Conference is invited to:

- a) Support the region in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and progress towards ICAO global targets;
- b) Request that ICAO move to incorporate at the next Assembly an increase in budget for the Asia Pacific Regional Office to strengthen ongoing engagement with the Asia Pacific region.

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