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Ref.:   SWG 21/1-09/94   16 December 2009

Subject: Proposal to establish Regional Aviation Safety Groups (RASGs)

Action required: Forward your agreement by 16 March 2010

Sir/Madam,

I have the honour to inform you that subsequent to a decision of the Council of ICAO on 18 March 2008, concerning increasing the effectiveness of planning and implementation regional groups (PIRGs), the Air Navigation Commission initiated a study aimed at identifying a regional mechanism to address safety issues.

The Commission noted that some areas (e.g. Pan-America), have already established their own regional mechanism to follow-up, monitor, coordinate and integrate the subregional and national efforts aimed at enhancing aviation safety.

The concept paper (Attachment A refers) addresses the need for the uniform establishment of regional aviation safety groups (RASGs) in all regions. The suggested terms of reference and work programmes of the RASGs are outlined in Attachment B. The Commission requested a consultation with States concerning the proposed RASGs before a recommendation is made to the ICAO Council. The proposal would not fundamentally change the efforts that are presently underway in several ICAO regions.

It would be appreciated if your agreement could be conveyed, if appropriate, on this proposed way forward by 16 March 2010.

Accept, Sir/Madam, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Raymond Benjamin
Secretary General

Enclosures:
     A — Concept paper for the establishment of RASGs
     B — Suggested terms of reference of RASGs

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CONCEPT OF REGIONAL AVIATION SAFETY GROUPS (RASGs)

1.   **BACKGROUND**

1.1   ***Assembly Resolution.*** Resolution A36-7 resolved that the global plans (Global Air Navigation Plan and Global Aviation Safety Plan) shall provide the framework in which regional, subregional and national implementation plans will be developed and implemented thus ensuring harmonization and coordination of efforts aimed at improving international civil aviation safety and efficiency.

1.2   **GANP.** The implementation of air navigation systems follows a well established mechanism based upon the regional air navigation planning process which evolved to a more robust system with the introduction of the Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP). The GANP initiated a top-down approach in which the regions, through the planning and implementation regional groups (PIRGs), implement a regional performance framework.

1.3   **GASP.** The Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP) utilizes a bottom-up approach that allows groups of States to analyze gaps and implement action plans to meet specific needs by leveraging existing political and economic structures between them. This approach has the advantages of facilitating a pooling of resources, as well as supporting a dynamic exchange of information. A void exists, however, as there is no regional follow-up and coordination of the implementation of these subregional action plans.

1.4   ***Reports to Council.*** Since PIRGs are established by the Council, the reporting structure calls for review of reports of PIRG meetings by the Commission and the Council. At present there is no formal reporting system to ICAO available in respect of the implementation of the GASP and there is no such mechanism to report back to Commission/Council on flight operational safety issues. In addition the Council (C-DEC 183/9 refers), on 18 March 2008, requested that the Commission present, in due course, a report to the Council regarding the development of new structures to coordinate Business Plan implementation activities related to safety, security and environmental subjects as well as the outcome of its further review of the mandate and terms of reference of the PIRGs.

1.5   ***Follow-up by the Commission.*** Further to the Council Decision (C-DEC 183/9 refers), the Commission continued the development of new structures for addressing safety issues through an ad-hoc working group (ADHWG) and held two meetings to discuss the way forward. The Secretariat, on the basis of inputs and comments received from the ADHWG, developed the concept of Regional Aviation Safety Groups which is presented in this paper.

2.   **CURRENT SCENARIO IN ADDRESSING REGIONAL SAFETY ISSUES**

2.1   ***PIRGs.*** The development of regional plans for air navigation systems is undertaken by ICAO's six PIRGs, which were established by the Council. The scope of PIRGs does not cover flight operations safety issues. The PIRG meetings are organized by regional offices and supported by Headquarters (Air Navigation Bureau). The PIRG reports are reviewed by the Commission on a regular basis and the Council, on a case-by-case basis.

2.2   ***COSCAP/RSOO.*** The cooperative development of operational safety and continuing airworthiness programmes (COSCAPs) are an agreement between Member States, executed by ICAO's Technical Co-operation Bureau by means of a Trust Fund, and are aimed at enhancing the safety and efficiency of air transport operations. The COSCAPs are limited to a few regions and within a region not all States are covered. In some subregions, Regional Safety Oversight Organizations (RSOOs) have been developed from COSCAP projects or have been established instead of COSCAPs.

2.3   ***DGCA meetings.*** Many of the regions convene regional or subregional meetings of Directors General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), which discuss a wide range of subjects encompassing safety, efficiency, economic, security, environment and regulatory issues related to air transport operations. The meetings and their follow-up are carried out by the regional offices with no substantial support from Headquarters.

2.4   ***Conclusion.*** From the review of the current regional mechanisms, it is proposed that a new follow-up body is needed that would monitor progress, coordinate actions among States and make recommendations to ICAO to facilitate the implementation of the GASP and the associated Global Aviation Safety Roadmap (GASR).

3.   **PROPOSED REGIONAL STRUCTURE**

3.1   ***Secretariat analysis.*** In September 2008, the ICAO Regional Directors (RDs) were requested to provide their views, listing the strengths and weaknesses on proposed options for new regional mechanism(s) for addressing flight operations safety issues. From the analysis of their responses, as well as teleconferencing held with the RDs on 3 September 2009, it was confirmed that the RDs were in favour of a separate regional group, on lines similar to PIRGs, to address flight operations safety issues including the implementation of the GASP/GASR. Also, the RDs did not support the idea of holding either back-to-back or concurrent PIRG-RASG meetings.

3.2   ***Regional structure.*** The COSCAPs and RSOOs are organized on a subregional basis. It may be noted that eventually some COSCAPs may evolve into RSOOs where appropriate. Considering that COSCAP/RSOO mechanisms are more focused on safety oversight issues and, as of now, do not cover all of the States of the region, it is considered necessary to establish a new regional mechanism known as Regional Aviation Safety Groups (RASGs) to address and harmonize all flight operations safety issues on an ICAO region-wide basis. Noting that in several regions there was actually a gradual evolution toward RASGs, this proposal, in effect, would facilitate ICAO to recognize groups that Contracting States had already chosen to form. The eventual recognition of RASGs by the Council would lead to the establishment of a formal reporting channel allowing ICAO to monitor the worldwide implementation of the Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP). The RASGs are expected to build on the work already done by these existing subregional organizations. However, RASGs will facilitate the exchange of best practices, cooperation and collaboration using a top-down approach complementing the bottom-up approach of planning by subregions, States and industry.

3.3   ***Need for partnership.*** The GASP and GASR are built on the principle of partnership and, as such, it is essential that all relevant stakeholders are involved in the development and implementation of any activities aimed at improving safety under the focus areas. Together with ICAO, the stakeholders in the civil aviation sector are States, airlines/operators, airports, air navigation service providers, aircraft and equipment manufacturers, maintenance and repair organizations, regional organizations, international organizations, and industry representatives. The commitment of all stakeholders is fundamental for success in improving safety.

4.   **ESTABLISHMENT OF RASGs**

4.1   ***Regional group*s *and terms of reference.*** Consistent with the PIRG mechanism, it is proposed that the following RASGs covering all of the regions of the world be established: Regional Aviation Safety Group – Pan American (RASG-PA) for the Caribbean, South American and North American Regions; Regional Aviation Safety Group – Europe (RASG-EUR) for the European Region; Regional Aviation Safety Group – Asia Pacific (RASG-APAC) for the Asia and Pacific Regions; Regional Aviation Safety Group – Africa (RASG-AFI) for the African Region; and Regional Aviation Safety Group – Middle East (RASG-MID) for the Middle East Region. In fact RASG-PA has already been established by the Pan American States themselves and held its second meeting in November 2009. In addition, the AFI Comprehensive Implementation Programme (ACIP) and its Steering Committee are monitoring and coordinating the implementation of the GASP/GASR within the region; however, once the ACIP project has ended, an entity will be needed to follow-up, monitor and coordinate activities. These regional experiences have been taken into account in determining the global model. The terms of reference detailing membership of the RASGs and their work programme are proposed in Attachment B.

4.2   ***Resources.*** With the creation of RASGs, one officer for each of the regional offices will be required. Currently, all regional offices have a post of Flight Safety Officer in their establishment. Further support for the RASG meetings would be provided using Headquarters staff.

4.3   ***Coordination between PIRGs and RASGs***:   A concern rose related to the parallels that were being drawn between the PIRG framework and the RASGs. It was noted that while the PIRGs did touch on some safety issues, they had been developed to deal with air navigation plans at a regional and global level with ICAO playing a key leadership role. In contrast, safety continued to lie within the sovereignty of individual States. It would be helpful if States could provide input on how to determine the safety issues to be covered by the RASGs and those that should remain with the PIRGs. Also, the need for a mechanism for coordination between PIRGs and RASGs was discussed and accordingly this aspect has been reflected in the suggested terms of reference.

5.   **CONCLUSION**

5.1   ***Systems approach.*** The proposed RASGs will serve as a regional cooperative forum integrating global, regional, subregional, national and industry efforts in continuing to enhance aviation safety worldwide. While RASGs will initially deal with safety issues directly related to flight operations, planning should be initiated as soon as circumstances permit to adopt a systems approach so that RASGs address safety issues from an integrated perspective that includes flight operations and ATM safety. As the Commission reviews the mandate and terms of reference of PIRGs, it is expected to address in the future an integration of the safety work done by these groups. Until such time, the Secretariat will ensure that the safety issues raised by the PIRGs and RASGs are fully coordinated and that a small group of members of the PIRGs attend the RASGs meetings and vice versa.

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SUGGESTED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR
REGIONAL AVIATION SAFETY GROUPS (RASGs)

1. **ESTABLISHMENT**

1.1 Consistent with the Planning and Implementation Regional Group (PIRG) mechanism, the Regional Aviation Safety Groups (RASGs) may be established in the following regions by the Council of ICAO. The meetings of the RASGs will be convened as required.

Regional Aviation Safety Group – Pan American (RASG-PA) for Caribbean, South American and North American Regions; (Already established by States themselves)

Regional Aviation Safety Group – Europe (RASG-EUR) for the European Region;

Regional Aviation Safety Group – Asia Pacific (RASG-APAC) for APAC Regions;

Regional Aviation Safety Group – Africa (RASG-AFI) for the African Region;

Regional Aviation Safety Group – Middle East (RASG-MID) for the Middle East Region.

2. **MEMBERSHIP**

2.1 Contracting States entitled to participate as members in a RASG meeting are:

a) those whose territories or dependencies are located partially or wholly within the geographical area to be considered by the meeting;

b) those located outside the area:

1) which have notified ICAO that aircraft on their register or aircraft operated by an operator whose principal place of business or permanent residence is located in such States, operate or expect to operate into the area; or

2) which provide facilities and services affecting the area.

2.2 Contracting States not meeting the above criteria and non-Contracting States are entitled to participate in RASG meetings as observers. The aircraft operators, international organizations, maintenance and repair organizations, regional organizations, aircraft manufactures, airport and air navigation service providers and any other allied organizations/representatives will be invited to attend RASG meetings in the capacity of observers. The members and observers will serve as partners of RASG and their joint commitment is fundamental for success in improving aviation safety worldwide. The Regional Director will serve as the Secretary of the RASG. Wherever two Regional Directors are involved, they would alternate serving as Secretary of the RASG and PIRG to balance the Secretariat responsibilities between these two regional groups.

3. **RESOURCES**

3.1 An officer from Headquarters (ANB) will participate and provide support to the RASG meetings. The ANB officer will serve as the interface between the RASG and the Air Navigation Commission and present the reports of RASG meetings to the Commission/Council for review and harmonization.

4. **WORK PROGRAMME**

4.1 The RASG will develop and implement a work programme that supports a regional performance framework for the management of safety on the basis of the Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP) and the Global Aviation Safety Roadmap (GASR).

4.2 Using the GASP and GASR, the RASG will build on the work already done by States, existing subregional organizations such as the Cooperative Development of Operational Safety and Continuing Airworthiness Programmes (COSCAPs) and Regional Safety Oversight Organizations (RSOOs) and support the establishment and operation of a performance-based safety system for the region by:

a) analyzing safety information and hazards to civil aviation at the regional level and reviewing the action plans developed within the region to address identified hazards;

b) facilitating the sharing of safety information and experiences among all stakeholders;

c) ensuring that all safety activities at the regional and subregional level are properly coordinated to avoid duplication of efforts;

d) reducing duplication of efforts by encouraging collaboration, cooperation and resource sharing;

e) conducting follow-up to GASP/GASR activities as required;

f) coordinating with respective PIRG on safety issues; and

g) providing feedback to ICAO to continually improve and ensure an up-to-date global safety framework.

— END —