



*International Civil Aviation Organization*

**THIRD MEETING OF ASIA/PAC OPMET MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE  
OF CNS/MET SUB-GROUP OF APANPIRG (OPMET/M TF/3)**

Bangkok, Thailand, 2-4 March 2005

**Agenda Item 2 a): Review: Current status of OPMET exchange in the Region**

**CURRENT STATUS OF OPMET EXCHANGE IN ASIA/PAC**

(Presented by the Secretariat)

**SUMMARY**

This paper presents information on recent developments related to the OPMET exchange in ASIA/PAC after the second meeting of OPMET Management Task Force.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The second meeting of OPMET/M TF was held from 10 to 13 February 2004 at ICAO Regional Office, Bangkok. The group discussed issues related to the improvement of availability and quality of the OPMET information generated in ASIA/PAC, as well as the inter-regional OPMET exchange. The group developed a comprehensive list of action items addressing all identified problems in the field of OPMET exchange.

1.2 This paper presents a summary of the follow-up activities after the OPMET/M TF/2 meeting undertaken by the Secretariat and some outstanding tasks related to the work of the group.

**2. DISCUSSION**

**Summary of activities**

2.1 The report of the OPMET/M TF/2 meeting was finalized in April 2004 and disseminated to all States and posted on the ICAO web.

2.2 In May 2004, a State letter was sent to all States providing ROBEX centres, requesting designation of ROBEX Focal Points. 16 replies were received and a List of ROBEX Focal Points was prepared as Appendix H to the new edition of ROBEX Handbook.

2.3 The OPMET/M TF/2 report was presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of CNS/MET Sub-group, 12-16 July 2004, Bangkok. The meeting formulated 2 draft decisions and 4 draft conclusions on OPMET issues for endorsement by APANPIRG.

2.4 APANPIRG/15 meeting, 23-27 August 2004, Bangkok reviewed the report of the CNS/MET SG/8 and endorsed the proposed decisions/conclusions as shown in the attachment to this paper.

2.5 The Secretariat, assisted by the Task Force members and ROBEX centres, finalized the ROBEX Handbook, 12<sup>th</sup> edition and the ASIA/PAC OPMET Data Banks ICD, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Both documents were published in hard copy and CD-ROM and distributed in November 2004 to States in the region. They are also available on the ICAO web site in pdf format.

2.6 The AIREP survey was conducted as planned. SIGMET tests started on 18 January 2005 with a test for volcanic ash SIGMET.

2.7 Several requests from IATA regarding availability of OPMET data from the region have been processed. In particular, the content of OPMET information from India has been discussed with the India Meteorological Department during an ICAO MET mission to India in October 2004.

### **Outstanding follow-up actions**

2.8 The meeting is requested to discuss the appropriate actions to be taken on the outstanding Decisions/Conclusions by APANPIRG on OPMET issues.

2.9 It is suggested that after the publishing of the new editions of the ROBEX Handbook and the ASIA/PAC OPMET Data Banks ICD the focus of the group should be shifted to developing monitoring and management procedures for the OPMET exchange in order to improve the availability and quality of the OPMET data.

### **3. ACTION BY THE MEETING**

3.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) note the content of this paper;
- b) make proposals on the necessary follow-up actions.

**-END-**

**Extract from APANPIRG/15 Report – Issues related to OPMET Exchange**

**Second meeting of the OPMET Management Task Force (OPMET/M TF/2)**

2.2.101 The Second Meeting of the Asia/Pacific OPMET Management Task Force (OPMET/M TF/2) was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 10 to 13 February 2004. The meeting reviewed the current status of the regional and inter-regional OPMET exchange and the operations and content of the Regional OPMET Data Banks (RODB). The meeting considered new requirements for OPMET exchanges under the ROBEX scheme. It was agreed that the available 9 and 12-hour TAF from the Asia/Pacific States should be included in the exchange. The meeting stressed on the need to improve the availability of AIREP, SIGMET and advisories and formulated corresponding action items. The meeting considered also the development of OPMET management procedures, in particular, procedures for monitoring the OPMET data availability and regularity, the OPMET bulletins update procedure, procedures for SIGMET tests, OPMET data banks quality control procedures.

2.2.103 The meeting reviewed the TORs, work programme and composition of the OPMET/M Task Force and noted, in particular that Indonesia and Hong Kong, China expressed the wish to become members of the group. The meeting agreed on the proposals made by the OPMET/M TF/2 meeting and formulated the following draft decision:

**Decision 15/35 – Terms of reference and work programme of OPMET/M TF**

That, the terms of reference, work programme and composition of the OPMET management Task Force be amended as shown in **Appendix J** to this agenda item of the Report.

**New edition of *ROBEX Handbook* and the *ASIA/PAC ICD for access to the OPMET Data Banks***

2.2.104 The meeting recalled that the *ROBEX Handbook* was the main regional guidance material providing detailed procedures for OPMET exchange in the Asia/Pacific and Middle East ICAO regions under the ROBEX scheme. The meeting noted that a fully revised 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the *ROBEX Handbook* as well as a new 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the *ASIA/PAC ICD for access to the OPMET Data Banks* were prepared by the ICAO Regional Office and reviewed by the CNS/MET SG/8 meeting. The meeting agreed that the two documents should be published and circulated to the States and formulated the following conclusion:

**Conclusion 15/36 – 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the *ROBEX Handbook* and 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the *ASIA/PAC ICD***

That, ICAO Regional Office publish the new 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the *ROBEX Handbook* and the new 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the *ASIA/PAC Interface Control Document for Access to the Regional OPMET Data Banks* (RODB), in accordance with the established procedures.

*Note: Both documents are available on the ICAO Regional Office web site as part of the CNS/MET SG/8 documentation.*

#### **Issues related to the format of the METAR and TAF bulletins**

2.2.105 The meeting noted with concern the findings of OPMET/M TF that serious discrepancies in the format of METAR and TAF messages and bulletins existed in the Region. This was illustrated by a number of examples provided by RODB Singapore to the OPMET/M TF/2 meeting. The meeting felt it necessary to urge the States to implement fully the ICAO and WMO provisions related to the format of the OPMET messages and bulletins and formulated the following conclusion:

#### **Conclusion 15/37 – Fostering the standardization of OPMET information in the Asia/Pacific region**

That, the States in the Asia/Pacific region be urged to fully implement the provisions related to the format of the METAR, SPECI and TAF messages and bulletins specified in the Annex 3 and in WMO Manual on Codes (WMO No. 306).

*Note: ICAO Regional Office to circulate a State letter and provide the States concerned with specific information regarding the observed discrepancies from the standard formats.*

#### **Issues related to AIREP exchange**

2.2.106 The meeting noted the concern expressed by the OPMET/M TF/2 meeting regarding the lack of up-to-date information on the status of AIREP exchange in the Region. It was agreed to conduct a survey on AIREP exchange with the Asia/Pacific and Middle East States in order to collect information on the availability and the usage of the AIREP information, and to verify the adequacy of the ROBEX procedures on the AIREP exchange.

2.2.107 The meeting noted that the WMO abbreviated heading currently used for the AIREP bulletins, exchanged through the AFTN, did not make any distinction between the routine and special air-reports; the data type designator UA was used for both. Knowing that the Annex 3 requirements for the dissemination of the routine (AIREP) and special air-reports (SPECIAL AIREP) reports were different, it was considered necessary to introduce a new data type designator for the special air-reports in order to ensure their proper exchange. Taking into account that, according to the *Working Arrangements between the International Civil Aviation Organization and the World Meteorological Organization* (Doc 7475), matters related to the aeronautical meteorological codes should be addressed to the WMO, the meeting formulated the following conclusion:

#### **Conclusion 15/38 – New data type designators for bulletins containing special air-reports**

That, in order to facilitate the exchange of the special air-reports, WMO be invited to designate a new data type designators (T<sub>1</sub>T<sub>2</sub>) for the WMO abbreviated headings of the bulletins containing special air-reports and, in particular, for special air-reports for volcanic ash.

### **Proposal for TAF with extended period of validity**

2.2.108 The meeting was informed of the new user requirements regarding the validity of the terminal aerodrome forecasts (TAF). With the current increased operational flight times, i.e. 18 hours or even more (e.g. SIN-JFK), it was considered that the current 18-hour or 24-hour TAF were not sufficient for the flight planning phase. Some operators have indicated a requirement for TAF with a validity period of at least 30-hour. The meeting considered these new requirements as a significant change to the current Annex 3 provisions, therefore, ICAO should study the feasibility of extending the validity of TAF. It was also recognized that this was “global” rather than a regional issue. The following conclusion was formulated:

#### **Conclusion 15/39 – Feasibility of extending the validity of TAF to 30 hours**

That, ICAO be invited to study, in coordination with the WMO, the feasibility of the introduction of a TAF with a period of validity of 30 hours in view of the new requirements for very long haul flights.

#### **Migration to BUFR-coded aeronautical meteorological messages (METAR/SPECI and TAF)**

2.2.109 The meeting was informed that the Fourteenth WMO Congress held in Geneva, 5 to 23 May 2003, endorsed a plan for migration from the traditional alphanumeric codes (TACs) to the so-called table-driven code formats (TDCFs), i.e. BUFR and CREX code forms. The migration plan would allow the use of table-driven codes in parallel with alphanumeric codes as of the year 2007, and would require the exclusive use of table-driven codes around the year 2015.

2.2.110 The meeting recognized that the transition to the TDCFs for aeronautical meteorological messages would be a major undertaking and potentially expensive. Therefore, in order to ensure an orderly migration to the TDCFs, it was recommended that detailed regional implementation plan should be developed by MET and CNS experts.

2.2.111 The communication problems related to the transition to TDCFs were outlined. With the introduction of AMHS it would be expected that the OPMET traffic, currently, promulgated on AFTN, would be transferred to the AMHS, as AFTN cannot support binary data. It should be noted that according to the implementation plan most Asia/Pacific States would be ready for bit oriented data exchange for the identified transition period. However, in order to handle BUFR-coded OPMET data detailed information should be provided regarding the message headers, the detailed format of the messages and bulletins, etc.

2.2.112 The meeting agreed that the task to address the migration to TDCFs should be assigned to the existing ATN Transition Task Force, which reported directly to APANPIRG, and to the OPMET Management Task Force, which reported to CNS/MET SG. Both groups should review the matter based on their specific expertise and coordinate a draft migration plan. In order to foster the coordination between the groups, it was envisaged that one of the next regular annual meetings of the ATN Transition TF and the OPMET/M TF should be held jointly.

2.2.113 In view of the above discussion, the meeting formulated the following Decision:

**Decision 15/40 – Planning for migration to BUFR-coded aeronautical meteorological messages**

That,

- a) the ATN Transition Task Force and the OPMET Management Task Force be tasked to address the issues related to the transition to BUFR-coded aeronautical meteorological messages by conducting studies, as necessary;
- b) the two Task Forces develop in coordination a regional plan for migration to BUFR-coded aeronautical meteorological information by the end of 2005.