



International Civil Aviation Organization

CAR/SAM Regional Planning and Implementation Group (GREPECAS)

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GREPECAS/16 – WP/24

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Agenda Item 6: Other business

THE ROLE OF CIVIL AVIATION DURING NATURAL DISASTERS

(Presented by Colombia)

SUMMARY

This working paper is intended to encourage the design and implementation of a regional plan for the establishment of procedures to be followed by the aviation sector in case of a natural disaster and/or catastrophic event, taking into account that civil aviation is an efficient and safe tool for transporting injured people, carrying supplies to the affected area, and for life support.

Strategic Objectives:

This working paper is related to Strategic Objective “E”: CONTINUITY: ***Maintain the continuity of aviation operations***, item 2 “Respond quickly and positively to mitigate the effect of natural or human events that may disrupt air navigation.

References:

Consider the BASIC IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES established in ICAO Doc A37-WP/1B-3, Appendix B.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 After analysing the recent catastrophic natural disasters occurred in Chile, Haiti, and China, it was noted that civil aviation, in addition to being affected by additional operational and logistic deficiencies, was subject to extreme pressure during the retrieval of injured people and the transport of supplies to the areas affected by a natural disaster and/or a catastrophe in a State.

1.2 There are no clear policies or priorities for emergency air operations.

1.3 The delay in the evacuation of the injured people increases exponentially their likelihood of dying, which means that the operational efficiency during these occurrences is critical for minimising their negative impact.

1.4 According to scientific reports, current circumstances are alerting communities about the likelihood of occurrence of natural disasters and/or catastrophic events worldwide.

1.5 The aviation sector must establish an operational and logistic plan at both regional and State level to address these events with a high level of efficiency.

2 ASPECTS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE AVIATION PLAN FOR ADDRESSING NATURAL DISASTERS AND/OR CATASTROPHIC EVENTS

2.1 Assess the condition of airport and air navigation infrastructure in the affected area following the event.

2.2 Identify the airport that is in best operating condition for conducting the activities of retrieval of injured people and transportation of supplies to the area affected by a natural disaster and/or catastrophe in a State.

2.3 Identify an alternate airport for evacuation activities and/or arrival of non-priority personnel and/or personnel that has not been affected.

2.4 Establish an emergency air traffic control point for traffic control in the affected area.

2.5 Define emergency heliports (heliports) and emergency air traffic procedures.

2.6 Establish emergency legislation, such as the suspension of commercial flights and the clearance of humanitarian flights in the area, and reassess fares in the emergency area.

3 COOPERATION AND STRENGTHS

3.1 The States must define an inventory of equipment and technology to be shared at regional level under the modality of cooperation, donation, and/or sharing, in keeping with the characteristics of available resources, the geographical location of the State, and the conditions for use defined by the States.

3.2 Technical and operational studies will be conducted for each region in order to establish effective coordination procedures.

3.3 States shall enter into operational agreements for an efficient mobilisation of available resources to address a natural or catastrophic disaster.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 A chapter must be included in the Global Air Navigation Plan and in regional and State plans, containing the aviation plan to address natural disasters or catastrophic events. To that end, ICAO Regional Offices will be responsible for advising States on the drafting and implementation of such plan. The plan must contemplate coordination among States when the event involves 2 or more States, as well as follow-up and improvement of the plan.

4.2 Agreements must be formalised between States to provide more efficient access for national and international aircraft participating in humanitarian operations in the emergency area. One of the principles to be considered is that airspace control in the emergency area must be under the exclusive responsibility of the aeronautical authority of each State. Consequently, procedures shall be established to assign priorities to aircraft that need to land at, or take-off from, the emergency area.

4.3 In his sense, it is important to instruct regional planning groups (PIRG) to perform the tasks derived from the actions suggested in this working paper.

4.4 The costs derived must be covered by the disaster response and prevention entities of each State.

5. SUGGESTED ACTION

The Meeting is invited to:

- a) Take careful note of the information contained in this working paper.
- b) Urge the Council to take action, in keeping with available resources.
- c) Urge the States to present initiatives through the regional planning groups (PIRG) for the development of the aviation plan to address natural disasters and/or catastrophic events.

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