



International Civil Aviation Organization

**AFI PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION REGIONAL GROUP
SIXTEENTH MEETING (APIRG/16)
(Kigali, Rwanda 19-23 November 2007)**

Agenda Item 3.0: Global and Inter-Regional Activities

3.3 Implementation of the Global Air Navigation Plan

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This paper provides a progress report on the implementation of the language proficiency requirements. The results of two surveys that were conducted to determine States' level of implementation are described, as well as the ICAO initiatives to support implementation.

Action by APIRG/16 is in paragraph 3.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 In 1996, the investigation of a mid-air collision between aircraft of two international airlines in Indian airspace revealed that the lack of proficiency in the English language of flight crew for radio communication on international flights contributed to the accident in which 349 persons lost their lives. In 1998, concern over the role of language in airline accidents led the 32nd Session of the Assembly to adopt a resolution in which the ICAO Council was urged to direct the Air Navigation Commission to consider this matter with a high degree of priority and to complete the task of strengthening relevant ICAO provisions concerning language requirements in order that States take steps to ensure that air traffic control personnel and flight crews involved in flight operations in airspace where the use of the English language is required are proficient in conducting and comprehending radiotelephony communications in the English language. This paper discusses the progress achieved in the implementation of the language proficiency requirements

2. PROGRESS REPORT

2.1 Pursuant to Resolution A32-16, the Air Navigation Commission developed amendments to Annex 1 — *Personnel Licensing*, Annex 6 — *Operation of Aircraft*, Annex 10 — *Aeronautical Telecommunications* and Volume II — *Communication Procedures including those with PANS status*, and Annex 11 — *Air Traffic Services*.

2.2 During the 33rd Session of the Assembly, while supporting ICAO's efforts to harmonize radiotelephony speech, the Assembly considered that this objective should not be limited to the English

language. States should maximize efforts to promote harmonization of radiotelephony speech also in other languages used in international aviation. This consideration was taken into account in the amendments to Annexes 1 and 10. Annex 10 specifies that the language to be used in radiotelephony communications shall be the language normally used by the station on the ground or the English language. Annex 10 also requires that the English language shall be available, on request from any aircraft station, at all stations on the ground serving designated airports and routes used by international air services. Annex 1 specifies the level of language proficiency that should be demonstrated by flight crew, air traffic controllers and aeronautical station operators in international operations (ICAO Operational Level 4).

2.3 On 5 March 2003, the Council adopted Amendment 164 to Annex 1. During its deliberations, the question of the 5 March 2008 applicability date for that part of the amendment pertaining to the language proficiency rating scale was raised. The Representative of Japan made a suggestion to conduct a survey to assess the progress of implementation of the language proficiency provisions. The understanding was that, if States encountered major difficulties in implementing the new language proficiency Standards in paragraph 1.2.9 of Annex 1, it would be possible for the Council to consider reviewing the applicability date. Accordingly, a survey on the progress of implementation of the language proficiency requirements was conducted through all seven ICAO Regional Offices in November 2005. Thirty-six States and two international organizations replied. During its review of this survey, the Air Navigation Commission noted the lack of responses to this survey and the large proportion of responses from States that have English as a first language. The Air Navigation Commission considered the results of the November 2005 survey inconclusive and therefore agreed that a change in the applicability date of 5 March 2008 could not be justified.

2.4 A second survey was transmitted by State letter on 27 October 2006. A total of sixty-six Contracting States responded. The numbers of responses from States that have English as a first language was not large enough to skew the results when compared to the numbers of responses from States in which English is not a first language. However, while both surveys showed that significant progress had been made by Contracting States, the concerns on the global implementation could not be alleviated due to insufficient feedback. The results of the second survey are summarized in the table below.

	NO. OF STATES WHO HAVE REPLIED INDICATING:		
	YES, FULL IMPLEMENTATION	NO, PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION	N/A
Will all pilots with air transport pilot's licence (ATPL) and commercial pilot's licence (CPL) be at least at Level 4?	48	18	
Will air traffic controllers be at least at Level 4?	41	21	
Will aeronautical station operators be at least at Level 4?	22	5	30
Will pilots with private pilot's licence (PPL) be at least at Level 4?	42	12	

2.5 ICAO undertook several initiatives to support the implementation of the language proficiency requirements. In September 2004, ICAO issued the *Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements* (Doc 9835) and, in February 2006, the audio CD-ROM ICAO

Language Proficiency Requirements – Rated Speech Samples. Regional seminars were conducted in Tokyo, Japan (December 2004); Beijing, China (June 2005); Kiev, Ukraine (March 2005); Buenos Aires, Argentina (September 2005); EUROCONTROL, Brussels (October 2005), Baku, Azerbaijan (December 2005), Dakar, Senegal (September 2006), Hong Kong, China (November 2006), Cairo, Egypt (September 2007). The first ICAO Aviation Language Symposium was held in September 2004 and the second in May 2007. Doc 9835, *Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements* is also being updated in light of experience gained by States in the implementation of the language proficiency requirements, as well as the discussion during the Second ICAO Aviation Language Symposium.

3. **ACTION BY APIRG:**

3.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in the paper; and
- b) approve the following:

Conclusion 18/x – Implementation of language provisions

That States

- a) implement the language provisions with a high level of priority and ensure that flight crews, air traffic controllers and aeronautical station operators involved in international operations maintain language proficiency at least at ICAO Operational Level 4; and
- b) provide data concerning their level of implementation of the Language Proficiency Requirements when requested by ICAO.

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