



*International Civil Aviation Organization*

**The Fourth Meeting of the Asia/Pacific ICAO Flight Plan and ATS Messages  
Implementation Task Force (FPL&AM/TF/4)**

Bangkok, Thailand, 2 – 3 June 2011

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**Agenda Item 3: Review Outcomes of Related Meetings**

**REVIEW REPORT APANPIRG/21**

(Presented by the Secretariat)

**SUMMARY**

This paper presents an overview of the outcomes of the 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of APANPIRG/21 related to the FPL & AM TF.

This paper relates to –

**Strategic Objectives:**

*A: Safety – Enhance global civil aviation safety*

*C: Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development of Air Transport – Foster harmonized and economically viable development of international civil aviation that does not unduly harm the environment*

**Global Plan Initiatives:**

GPI-12 Functional integration of ground systems with airborne systems

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Asia/Pacific Air Navigation Planning and Implementation Regional Group (APANPIRG/21, 6-10 September 2010) reviewed the outcomes of FPL&AM/TF/3 (23-24 August 2010, Bangkok). A full copy of the APANPIRG/21 meeting report is available on the website of Asia and Pacific Office at <http://www.bangkok.icao.int/> under the 'Meetings' menu.

## 2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Excerpts from the APANPIRG/21 report highlighting key discussions relating to the FPL&AM/TF are as follows (note: specific APANPIRG/21 Conclusions related to the TF are contained in FPL & AM TF-WP05 and FPL & AM TF-WP08).

### Review of the APANPIRG/20 Report and Subsequent ANC/Council Actions

3.2.1 With respect to Conclusion 20/8 – Notification of State Transition Date to New Flight Plan Format, it was noted that, regarding the due date of 1 July 2010, only Australia, Hong Kong China and Japan had submitted their scheduled date and implementation methodology to ICAO. ATM/AIS/SAR/SG/20 therefore requested the Secretariat to urge States to submit their plans as soon as possible.

3.2.14 The meeting noted that the Chairman of ATM/AIS/SAR/SG had expressed the view that implementation of the NEW flight plan format would be a problem if it is not implemented in a uniform manner globally. He had further stated that there would be huge problems if no fall back arrangement was to put in place. It was therefore considered important for States to review urgently the status and readiness for implementation. It was recognized that despite the action taken two years ago by establishing the Task Force, there were still a number of concerns on its implementation. Concern was raised that some States might not be able to meet the target date of implementation. IATA stated that it was not just FPL but also expected huge problems associated with the changes in numerous ATS message formats. It was recognized that it was high time that States came up with strategies and timelines for implementation of the transition plan. In view of the above, the Task Force was expected to make a firm decision in a timely manner. It was emphasized that global harmonized implementation could only be achieved through timely coordination work carried out by ICAO Headquarters.

### Flight Plan Implementation Tracking System (FITS)

3.2.15 It was noted that ICAO Flight Plan Implementation Tracking System (FITS) provides information regarding the implementation status of the NEW flight plan format in each State along with guidance and harmonized solutions to any difficulties encountered in the implementation process. It can be accessed at <http://www2.icao.int/en/FITS/Pages/home.aspx>. A State letter was issued by ICAO Headquarters requesting States to inform the respective ICAO regional office accredited to States of actions completed toward implementation of the PANS-ATM provisions regarding the NEW flight plan content which will ensure current status of FITS in each State. This issue was discussed and some updates were provided.

### Japan and the Republic of Korea

3.2.65 Japan advised that a problem would happen if some States or some airspace users do not comply with NEW flight plan format. The transition should be done in a coordinated manner targeting the applicability date. ICAO has established the guidance material for smooth transition, and urged the contracting States to transit to the NEW.

3.2.66 If the implementation status is different by States or regions, it would be a significant problem to the operation of air traffic service, especially, if the adjacent States use different flight plan format. The consequences could be that the stability of air traffic service could not be secured.

3.2.67 The meeting was strongly urged that all States should commit to apply the NEW flight plan format by 15 November 2012.

3.2.68 States not notifying their schedule date and implementation methodology should notify to ICAO Bangkok office as early as possible.

3.2.69 Further, Japan was of view that each State needed to know the transition plan of adjacent States in order to start the coordination earlier.

3.2.70 If the case more than three FIRs are close, trilateral coordination would be needed.

3.2.71 The meeting agreed that Contracting States should start close coordination as early as possible with adjacent States based on the transition plan that was notified by each State.

#### Australia

3.2.103 Australia recalled that the current ICAO model flight plan form was universally adopted and implemented by States. PRESENT was defined as the present flight planning and ATS message formats as defined in the current version of the PANS-ATM. NEW is defined as the flight planning and ATS message formats as specified in Amendment 1 to the PANS-ATM.

3.2.104 State letter AN 13/2.1-09/9 dated 6 February 2009 – Guidance for implementation of flight plan information to support Amendment 1 of the *Procedures for Air Navigation Services – Air Traffic Management*, Fifteenth Edition (PANS-ATM, DOC 4444) advised States that the flight plan changes had considerable consequences on ANSP flight data processing systems that check and accept flight plans and related messages, use flight plan data in displays for controller reference, use data in ANSP automation and which support communication between ANSPs as the flight progresses. Preparation for the changes should therefore be made well in advance of the applicable date. The changes also have consequences for airspace users. If a flight plan with new content is sent to an ANSP that has not prepared to accept the new content then it is likely that some information will be lost, misinterpreted or cause a rejection of the flight plan.

3.2.105 Additionally, State Letter AN 13/2.1-09/9 states that “to allow performance case considerations to drive individual airspace user and ANSP implementation schedules, the ATM system will need to simultaneously support both PRESENT and NEW for a period of time.” However, from 15 November 2012, ANSPs are not required to accept and process PRESENT and airspace users are expected to file NEW as using PRESENT is not assured.

3.2.106 At FPL&AM/TF/2 a number of risks associated with implementation had been identified during development of the region's implementation strategy. These risks are summarised as follows:

- a) IATA advised that in order to ensure compliance by States the changes to the flight plan format should be issued as SARPs to ensure uniform application by all States as it is necessary in the interests of safety or regularity of international air navigation. Amendment 1 to PANS-ATM 4.4.1.3 still only advises operators and ATS units that they *should* comply with the instructions for completion of the flight plan form. With the almost total reliance placed on FPL and ATS message formats in today's automated ATM systems, IATA firmly believes the FPL format should be adopted as a standard.
- b) On FITS (<http://www2.icao.int/en/FITS/Pages/home.aspx>), it is apparent that there is a great majority of States that are still only evaluating their current systems with no update regarding implementation.
- c) State Letter AN 13/2.1-09/9 provides a conversion table for flight plan data from NEW to PRESENT however no conversion from PRESENT to NEW is available. Therefore if an aircraft transits FIRs which alternately support NEW, PRESENT and NEW data will be irretrievably lost.
- d) If there is no universal adoption by States of the NEW flight plan format there is a possibility that airspace users will not be prepared to adopt the changes as there would be a requirement to update their flight planning systems to allow filing of flight plans in two formats in circumstances where a region or ANSP only supports NEW or PRESENT.

3.2.107 There would be a significant financial investment to be made by States and airspace users to implement the 2012 ICAO Flight Plan. States require a level of certainty to be provided through ICAO's PANS and SARPs that the changes to be implemented are going to be adopted by all States and airspace users.

#### United States

3.2.108 United States informed the meeting that the following instruction for Item 18 is included in the Amendment: *Note: Use of indicators not included under this item may result in data being rejected, processed incorrectly or lost.*

3.2.109 European Region signaled intent to document a difference in Regional Supplemental Procedures (Doc. 7030). They plan to require filing of an indicator that is not defined in the PANS-ATM to contain region-specific information.

3.2.110 It was recognized that it could be useful to segregate region-specific data in order to avoid confusion or training difficulties for other regions. For example, the fact that a flight is exempt from European requirements for VHF RTF with 8.33 kHz spacing is of no relevance to other regions.

3.2.111 United States, however, advised the meeting that the presence of “EUR/” may subject flight plans to rejection in other regions, depending on the automation system in particular States.

3.2.112 United States further advised that documenting a non-standard filing practice in SUPPS would therefore seem to be insufficient if the non-standard practice affects automated flight plan processing in other regions. Such actions need coordination among all affected regions.

3.2.113 There were several potential solutions to this problem, including but not limited to:

- 1) **Avoid use of non-standard indicators.** Regional filing requirements should make use of only the defined indicators.
- 2) **Allow unrecognized indicators.** Automation systems would accept and pass along any such information received, but would otherwise ignore it. Regions would document any non-standard indicators in their Regional Supplemental Procedures (Doc 7030) which would allow other regions to program for them if desired.
- 3) **Define an indicator for each region.** The content for each indicator would be managed within the region (e.g. EUR/, NAM/, SAM/). Automation systems could add this controlled list of parameters at the same time as the changes for Amendment 1, and each region would know to ignore any information filed for other regions.

3.2.114 In any case, if region-specific indicators are allowed, there should be no expectation that ANSPs in other regions would be able to understand, maintain or otherwise communicate with filers or pilots about the contents of them.

#### IATA

3.2.116 IATA recalled that ICAO issued the State letter AN 13/2.1-08/50 on 25 June 2008 amending the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of PANS-ATM. The effective date of 15 November 2012 gave industry stakeholders more than four years to make necessary preparations for changes to the NEW ICAO FPL and associated ATS messages.

3.2.117 IATA maintained that due to the importance of the changes, the formats should be adopted as a Standard and not simply a Recommendation. The reliance on messaging with every automated system is such that a single “point of failure” (or non compliance) could have a wide ranging impact.

3.2.118 APANPIRG/19 recognized the implication of these changes when establishing the FPL&AM/TF while also noting that they considered that ICAO global leadership was critical in addressing the issues to ensure a smooth transition.

*Regional/State Readiness*

3.2.119 IATA observed that there continued to be significant variation in preparation and approach of both States and regions. Some regions had only just started their preparations and some larger States have already indicated that they have no intention of meeting the effective date.

3.2.120 In this region, most States missed the APANPIRG deadline to notify the ICAO Regional Office its transition plans and target dates by 1 July 2010 in accordance with Conclusion 20/8. The ASPAC TF itself however, has been instrumental in developing some excellent guidance material and has attempted to highlight its concerns globally.

*Cutover Plan*

3.2.121 IATA informed the meeting that the actual timeline for airlines to cutover to the NEW format had not been defined with no guidelines for handling of traffic already airborne. Without clearly defined plans and timelines, the ability for airlines to prepare was limited. The only date available was 15 November 2012 which would potentially lead to every airline in the world switching to the new Format on the same day, potentially at the same time.

*Regional Variations*

3.2.122 While the NEW format may not be the best for every circumstance, it represents a significant step forward, particularly with respect to PBN notifications. If a revision to the guidelines is considered necessary, it should either be adopted on a global basis or else rejected. Regional or State solutions should be strongly discouraged.

3.2.123 Variations in any part of the format would likely create problems for both airlines and ANSPs. AIDC messaging in particular creates an enormous problem with States reliant on the ability of other States “upstream” to process messaging appropriately.

*Global Leadership*

3.2.124 Despite calling for global leadership, IATA continued to see State/regions largely left to own devices. It appeared that the only contribution to facilitate improved planning was the establishment of a website. While useful for increased information, this is not providing increased guidance.

3.2.125 IATA needed urgent action by the ICAO Headquarters to assess the global state of readiness, identify and agree necessary changes and harmonise plans/guidance on a global basis.

3.2.126 Without it, the potential risk to aviation globally was enormous.

Review by the Meeting

3.2.127 States felt that a contingency plan should be formulated which should cover eventualities where a State or group of States is not in a position to receive flight plans in the NEW Format. ICAO advised that FPL&AM/TF agreed that it was premature to develop the contingency plan as no State in the Region has explicitly expressed that the effective date of 15 November 2012 would not be met. The task Force would continue to urge States to implement the NEW flight plan format by the due date. Nevertheless, FPL&AM/TF was aware of the possibility for the need to develop the contingency plan and had included the task in the task list of the Task Force to be commenced in the first quarter of 2012.

3.2.128 In regard to making the NEW flight plan format an ICAO Standard, ICAO advised that the proposal had been discussed at the ANC. The ANC was of view that the NEW flight plan format should remain in the PAN status.

3.2.129 With reference to global coordination, the meeting received an update from ICAO Headquarters that the ANB has now an expert appointed exclusively to address all new flight plan issues. His main tasks include supporting regional subgroups meetings on Flight Plan, continuously monitor FITS to identify any concerned issues and provide interregional harmonization.

**3. ACTION BY THE MEETING**

3.1 The meeting is invited to

- a) note the information contained in this paper; and
- b) discuss any relevant matters as appropriate.

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