



International Civil Aviation Organization

**First Meeting of the Asia/Pacific Regional Search and Rescue Working Group
(APSAR/WG/1)**

Bangkok, Thailand, 15 – 19 August 2016

Agenda Item 4: Asia/Pacific and inter-regional SAR planning, coordination and cooperation

LETTERS OF AGREEMENT

(Presented by the United States)

SUMMARY

This paper proposes that recent efforts and documents provide information that should be compared so that recommendations are developed to assist States in establishing SAR agreements. ICAO USOAP Reports and Asia/Pacific experience confirm that many States have not established SAR agreements as called for under Annex 12. The Asia/Pacific SAR Plan provides some background information. ‘Letters of Agreement’ was a specific topic and session at the ICAO Regional and Inter-regional Seminar and Workshop on SAR held 19-22 July 2016 in the Seychelles. Also, ICAO and IMO have agreed to a sample SAR agreement as published in the IAMSAR Manual Volume I.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This paper proposes that recent efforts and documents provide information that should be compared so that recommendations are developed to assist States in establishing SAR agreements. ICAO USOAP Reports and Asia/Pacific experience confirm that many States have not established SAR agreements as called for under Annex 12.

1.2 The Asia/Pacific SAR Plan provides some background information. ‘Letters of Agreement’ was a specific topic and session at the ICAO Regional and Inter-regional Seminar and Workshop on SAR held 19-22 July 2016 in the Seychelles. Also, ICAO and IMO have agreed to a sample SAR agreement as published in the IAMSAR Manual Volume I. Practical advice could be developed to assist SAR agencies to overcome concerns from their own managers or ministry of foreign affairs or the military or political or other reasons.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The Asia/Pacific SAR Plan V1.0 provides valuable insight regarding the aeronautical community’s “Letter of Agreement”:

- 2.1.1 Paragraph 2.7 ...Short term measures that may be implemented relatively easily include the establishment of a national SAR committee and ensuring SAR agreements are in place with neighboring States allowing for seamless cross-border transit of search assets engaged in SAR activity. A SAR agreement can be in the form of a ‘Letter of Agreement’ (LOA) or a Memorandum of Understanding or other acceptable term indicating a lower form of arrangement for operational matters between SAR service providers (such as RCCs and/or RSCs) or a more formal agreement for arrangements between governments concerned.

2.1.2 Paragraph 7.2 *SAR Standards and Procedures*

(b) establish SAR agreements with States having adjoining SRRs or FIRs, including trans-regional neighbours (the agreements should include clear responsibilities for overlapping or non-adjointing aeronautical and maritime SRRs;

(c) provide up to date cross-border information on SAR capability (this should be included in bilateral SAR agreements);

(d) pre-arrange procedures for cross-border SAR responses (this should be included in bilateral SAR agreements)

2.2 The ICAO Asia/Pacific Bangkok Office was one of four ICAO regions that recently met specifically on SAR matters. The ICAO Regional and Inter-regional Seminar and Workshop on SAR held 19-22 July 2016 in the Seychelles. A key presentation was ‘SAR Letters of Agreement and Search and Rescue Exercises’. After this presentation the Workshop broke into small groups to complete bilateral SAR agreements. Key points made about the “SAR agreement (LoA)” included:

a) Contracting States should enter into agreements with neighbouring States to strengthen search and rescue cooperation and coordination, setting forth the conditions for entry of each other’s SAR units into their respective territories. These agreements should also provide for expediting entry of such units with the least possible formalities (Annex 12 Recommendation 3.1.5). Contents of a SAR Agreement:

- States or organization concerned;
- Effective date of the agreement;
- Contact details;
- Media through which contact for assistance will be executed;
- Procedures/conditions for entry of each other’s SAR units into their respective territories [international waters within the SAR region was not mentioned];
- Facilitation of personnel [rapid immigration clearance];
- Who is going to provide what (fuel, accommodation, repatriation, etc.);
- Removal of supplies or temporary structures [is this SAR or ‘recovery’];
- Cost recovery mechanisms;
- Insurance in case of damages incurred; and
- Accountability (signature).

2.3 IAMSAR Manual, Volume I, Appendix J *SAR agreements* provides one page of notes explaining aspects about agreements and then a 4-page sample agreement. (Appendix I is available as a separate Word file.) The sample agreement has 10 sections, some of which are different from that discussed in the ICAO Regional and Inter-regional session held July 2016. These sections are:

2.3.1 Introduction

2.3.2 Objectives and scope

2.3.3 Responsibilities [including provisions for entry]

- 2.3.4 SAR Regions [including geographic coordinates]
- 2.3.5 Rescue Coordination Centers [names of RCC and other general information]
- 2.3.6 Cooperation [operational and other matters such as exercises]
- 2.3.7 Finances [supports the international practice that each Party is to fund its own expenses]
- 2.3.8 Application of this Agreement
- 2.3.9 Modification
- 2.3.10 Duration, Withdrawal and Discontinuation

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

- 3.1 The meeting is invited to:
 - a) note the information contained in this paper;
 - b) compare the information provided in the Asia/Pacific SAR Plan V1.0, text from the ICAO Regional and Inter-regional Seminar and Workshop on SAR held 19-22 July 2016 in the Seychelles, and the sample SAR agreement shown as Appendix J to IAMSAR Manual Volume I, Appendix I; and
 - c) develop ideas to assist States in completing agreements.

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