

FOURTH MEETING OF THE ALLPIRG/ADVISORY GROUP

Agenda Item 2.3: Interregional coordination and harmonization mechanism – Other issues which have global ramifications

ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL FLIGHT SAFETY GROUPS

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This working paper presents information on the establishment of regional flight safety groups. Action by the meeting is at paragraph 4.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 For the past few years, ICAO has been developing plans and programmes to improve flight safety. Assembly Resolution A32-15 realized that the public's perception of aviation safety is largely based on the number of aircraft accidents rather than the accident rate, and noted that the expected increase in the volume of international civil aviation will result in an increasing number of aircraft accidents unless the accident rate is reduced. Therefore, although the current accident rate is relatively low, an increase in the number of accidents due to increases in traffic volume is likely to undermine public confidence in civil aviation which would in turn affect the growth of the industry. The Assembly stressed the need for a reduction in the rate of fatal accidents in air transport operations, and recognized that improvements in the accident rate would require new approaches on the part of all participants in the aviation industry, including ICAO, States, aircraft manufacturers and operators.

1.2 Historically, ICAO's leadership has been very successful in assisting States in air navigation matters. This has been accomplished primarily by establishing and fostering Planning and Implementation Regional Groups (PIRGs) which focus on coordinating the development and implementation of air navigation plans. However, the PIRGs are limited to air navigation planning and do not address flight operations and related safety issues.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 While it is acknowledged that planning and implementation of air navigation services are important and that this work will improve safety, the Air Navigation Commission (ANC) has proposed that an increased emphasis be placed on assisting States in accident prevention through the formation of proactive

regional flight safety groups. The functions of the groups would be to review the implementation of various global safety initiatives, to systematically review regional accident and incident data and identify repetitive causes, to develop and recommend regional aviation safety plans to supplement the Global Aviation Safety Plan, and to exchange aviation safety data with corresponding groups in other regions. Each group would monitor flight safety in its region and would consist of flight safety experts from States, international organizations and industry, supported by the ICAO Regional Offices with assistance from the Air Navigation Bureau. The appendix to this paper outlines one method of establishing such groups and provides a concept of how they could work. The formation of these groups would be in line with Assembly Resolution A32-15 which endorsed the concept of concentrating the safety-related activities of ICAO on safety initiatives that offer the best safety dividend in terms of reducing the accident rate, and encouraged the formation of regional and sub-regional safety groups.

2.2 During the past decade, ICAO Regional Offices have committed significant resources to assist States in updating regional air navigation plans, placing emphasis on CNS/ATM planning. Approximately fifty-five meetings scheduled by the regional offices for the year 2000 dealt with air navigation planning, including workshops and seminars. In contrast, during the same period of time, only six regional meetings focussed on flight safety. A review of the typical staffing of regional offices indicates a similar emphasis on air navigation planning. In the seven regional offices, there are at least eight professionals dedicated to the field of air transport, and approximately thirty-six professionals specializing in the various areas of air navigation planning: Air Traffic Management (ATM), Communications, Navigation and Surveillance (CNS), Aerodromes, Air Routes and Ground Aids (AGA), Meteorology (MET), Aeronautical Information (AIS), etc. In contrast, there are seven professional staff specializing in safety oversight, and a portion of their time should be available to provide assistance on operational safety issues.

2.3 The Commission noted that support for the proposal had been expressed by the ICAO Regional Directors, but that the capacity of the regional offices to support such groups would be contingent upon the provision of appropriate resources. The ANC view is that the support and leadership of regional offices and the Air Navigation Bureau is essential to the success of these groups, and the groups should receive priority funding because of the direct safety benefits that can be expected to flow from their work. Without adequate resources and the support and leadership of the regional offices and the Air Navigation Bureau, the groups are unlikely to function effectively. To facilitate the work of the flight safety groups, the ANC agreed that the capacities of the regional offices and the Air Navigation Bureau to provide assistance on operational safety issues need to be ensured by creating and filling new positions to augment those that were reclassified as safety oversight positions. As a minimum, each Regional Office should have one Regional Officer/Flight Safety (RO/FS) position, because these staff will be needed to coordinate and support the work of the flight safety group in each region. The costs of the RO/FS staff have been included in the draft programme budget of the Organization for 2002, 2003 and 2004. Without the support of these staff, the regional flight safety groups are unlikely to produce any cohesive output.

2.4 In the light of the envisaged standardization and role of the Air Navigation Bureau for the regional offices, there is also a need to replace three Technical Officers, Operations/Airworthiness (TO/OPS/AIR) Headquarters staff who were transferred to the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP). Without these staff, effective guidance and participation by the Air Navigation Bureau in the work of the regional flight safety groups would be difficult, possibly leading to non-standardized outcomes. The cost of replacing the three Headquarters TO/OPS/AIR staff has also been included in the draft programme budget of the Organization for 2002, 2003 and 2004.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The ANC view is that ICAO should take the initiative to establish regional flight safety groups to address proactively the flight safety issues in each region, with a particular emphasis on reviewing regional accident and incident data, identifying repetitive causes and recommending specific action. This increased emphasis on flight safety issues will require the allocation of additional resources or re-prioritizing current resources. The ANC also recognizes that should there be a shortage of resources, prioritization should be given to those regions most in need.

3.2 The ANC believes that these groups should meet at least annually. The participation of industry and international organizations in these groups would be critical to their success and every effort should be made to include them. The groups would keep the Air Navigation Commission and the Council apprised of their respective efforts.

3.3 The ANC believes that this work should begin as soon as possible and that the first organizational meeting should be held in each region before the end of the current triennium under the joint leadership of the regional offices and the Air Navigation Bureau. On 4 December 2000, the ANC (155-4 and 7) recommended that the Council:

- a) approve the establishment of regional flight safety groups made up of representatives from States, international organizations, and industry in each region, and provide the necessary resources to support them;
- b) agree that the first meeting of each group should take place before the end of the 1999-2001 triennium;
- c) agree that new flight safety positions should be established within the Regions and at Headquarters, to provide the capability to assist States in the prevention of accidents, and that the new positions should be filled as soon as possible; and
- d) agree that, should there be a shortage of resources, prioritization should be given to those regions most in need.

3.4 The Council (161-13) recognized that the Organization should have as its objective the reduction of the worldwide accident rate in air transport operations in general, and accepted in principle the proposal to establish the proposed regional flight safety groups. However, a final decision on the proposal was postponed, pending the report of the Finance Committee on the Programme Budget, and the Council's consideration of that report.

4. ACTION BY THE MEETING

4.1 The meeting is invited to note the Council acceptance in principle of the proposal to establish regional flight safety groups, pending a final decision during discussion of the Programme Budget.

- - - - -

APPENDIX

REGIONAL FLIGHT SAFETY GROUPS

1. Considering that the method used by the regional offices to assist States in air navigation planning has been successful, a similar method could be used in the field of OPS/AIR and other flight safety areas. The following is one approach that could be considered.
2. Each ICAO region would establish an informal group made up of State experts who have responsibility for the safety of flight operations. The membership would include all interested States from the region with the group's terms of reference as detailed in 4 b) below. It would also include representatives from international organizations and industry. At the outset the regional flight safety groups may be small, but because the composition of each flight safety group would ultimately resemble that of the PIRGs, they could be expected to reach a similar size in line with their increasing work output and growing interest from other States and industry organizations in the region.
3. The groups would be established and led by the ICAO Regional Offices. However, considering that the agenda would, in some respects, need to be standardized, expertise from the Headquarters Operations/Airworthiness and Accident Investigation and Prevention Sections should be made available.
4. Each group would meet informally and at least annually for the following purposes:
 - a) reviewing the implementation of various global safety initiatives;
 - b) reviewing regional accident and incident data, identifying repetitive causes and recommending specific action;
 - c) coordinating the development of, and the implementation of, methods for gathering data on accidents and incidents within the region; and
 - d) coordinating the OPS/AIR aspects to ensure that the implementation of related ATS programmes would lead to the same or higher safety levels (i.e. reduced vertical separation minimum (RVSM), implementation of global navigation satellite system (GNSS), etc.).
5. These meetings would not only provide a forum for the items listed above but would also provide the following opportunities:
 - a) for neighbouring States to share experiences on how they resolve various problems;
 - b) for ICAO to provide the latest information on recent safety priorities; and
 - c) for the development of sub-regional groups to share responsibilities.