



*International Civil Aviation Organization*

**FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE  
ASIA/PACIFIC AIR NAVIGATION PLANNING AND  
IMPLEMENTATION REGIONAL GROUP (APANPIRG/15)  
Bangkok, Thailand, 23 to 27 August 2004**

**Agenda Item 2.4: Other Air Navigation Matters**

**COOPERATION BETWEEN FIJI AND TONGA TO PROVIDE A  
SINGULAR PROVIDER FOR AIR TRAFFIC SERVICES BELOW  
FL245 IN THE PACIFIC REGION**

(Presented by Fiji/Tonga)

**SUMMARY**

This paper presents to the meeting the cooperation between Fiji and Tonga to establish a singular regional ATS provider in their respective territories.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The responsibilities and obligations of the states of Fiji and Tonga in international air navigation are defined in the eighteen Annexes to the Convention on International Civil Aviation. With the mandatory requirement for the establishment of Safety Management Systems (SMS) in aviation safety related areas and the impending Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) initiatives of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), there is an increasing awareness amongst the aviation regulatory authorities, service providers, and the aviation industry in general on the need to enhance safety and to meet their respective obligations under the civil aviation conventions as a matter of priority.

1.2 Although the ICAO safety initiatives have raised seemingly insurmountable challenges, the states of Fiji and Tonga greatly applaud the efforts of ICAO in striving to achieve a safe, efficient and economically sustainable environment in international air navigation. These states also recognize that in order to meet their respective obligations under the conventions on the short, medium and long-term basis, there is a need to pool resources and adopt a regional approach concept towards the provision of air navigation services and regulatory safety oversight functions.

**2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 The aviation Ministers of Pacific Island States have long before recognized the need to unite and adopt a regional approach if individual Island States involved in international air navigation are to meet and comply with the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPS) contained in the eighteen Annexes to the Convention on International Civil Aviation. Thus, the Aviation Ministers of the Pacific Forum countries endorsed the Pacific Upper Airspace Management (PUAM) concept. The concept, in essence, was aimed at consolidating the airspace in the region and the establishment of a regional entity to provide air traffic services in this consolidated block of airspace and to manage it on a cooperative basis.

2.2 Although the concept was widely supported, there were divisions amongst participating states on the implementation methodologies and the applicable time frame. Whilst these issues were being debated upon, the states of Samoa and Tonga identified an area where improvements, mutually beneficial to both the air traffic services providers and the airspace users, could be achieved. Consequently, the Forum aviation ministers, in a meeting in Apia, Samoa, in 1998, agreed that all works relating to PUAM cease until such time that the Pacific island countries are ready to pursue the regional concept. Subsequently, Samoa and Tonga initiated an amendment proposal to the Asia Pacific Region Air Navigation Plan, APAC 98/8, which was aimed primarily at achieving a homogenous air traffic flow, in the upper airspace, on the main trunk route connecting New Zealand and the west coast of the United States. The states of New Zealand, Samoa and Tonga cooperated and worked closely in the implementation of APAC 98/8 and continue to maintain a close and commendable working relationship in air traffic management as well as in other areas of common interests. As far as Samoa and Tonga are concerned, the changes brought about by the implementation of APAC 98/8 and the targeted objectives have been achieved and are considered to be adequate and satisfactory.

### 3. **CURRENT SITUATION**

3.1 Whilst the arrangements for the upper airspace over Samoa and Tonga have been dealt with and considered to be satisfactory, there is space for improvement in the provisions of air traffic services, communications and navigation aids in the lower airspace, specifically in the Tonga sector of the Auckland Flight Information Region (FIR).

3.2 In line with the planning criteria established by ICAO and in consideration of current and proposed scheduled aircraft operations in the region, it is anticipated that there will be a growing increase in the volume of medium turbo-prop aeroplanes operating regionally between Pacific island states at FL245 and below. To cope therefore with current and forecasted demands, the states of Fiji and Tonga have agreed to cooperate through the exchange and sharing of resources to enable each of the states to satisfy the requirements of the ICAO SARPS.

3.3 With respect to the regulatory safety oversight responsibilities of these two states as prescribed in Annexes 1, 6, 8, 14 and 17 respectively, Fiji and Tonga are among the eight founding members of the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO) which has been established in Port Vila, Vanuatu, and which is expected to become operational soon. The efforts of these eight states, which include Australia, towards the establishment of PASO, have been praised by the aviation community in general, including ICAO and other prominent aviation authorities such as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

### 4. **PROPOSED CHANGES**

4.1 Again in the vein of regional cooperation, the states of Fiji and Tonga have progressed on further to pool resources and establish a singular regional Air Traffic Services (ATS) provider in their respective territories, at FL245 and below. Other than strengthening and pursuing further regional cooperation in airspace and air traffic management in the region, as identified in previous airspace/air traffic management studies in the past, and as recommended by ICAO, there are a number of important reasons for the creation of a single ATS provider in the lower airspace of Fiji and Tonga. The establishment of the singular ATS provider is aimed primarily at enhancing the provision of ATS in the above areas and in allowing the two states to meet their respective responsibilities as stipulated under the Conventions on International Civil Aviation.

4.2 The proposed amendment is not expected to affect the provision of ATS in the upper airspace over Fiji and Tonga.

4.3 Some states in the South Pacific region, in order to upgrade the level of services they currently provide, have indicated their willingness to accede to this singular Air Traffic Services provider and have therefore taken the appropriate steps to obtain the official approval of their respective government.

5. **ACTION BY APANPIRG**

5.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the developments being made by the States of Fiji, and Tonga;
- b) endorse regional cooperation as a means for states with limited resources to meet the SARPS with respect to Air Traffic Management.

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