



## **FACILITATION (FAL) DIVISION — TWELFTH SESSION**

**Cairo, Egypt, 22 March to 2 April 2004**

### **Agenda Item 6: International Health Regulations (IHRs)**

#### **HARMONIZED CONTINGENCY PHASED RESPONSE PLAN FOR AIRPORTS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD VIA AIR TRAVEL OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES INCLUDING SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME (SARS)**

(Presented by China and Singapore)

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, in 2003 had considerable social and economic impact in Asia.

1.2 When the last known human-to-human transmission was broken on 5 July 2003, the virus had spread to 29 countries, infected 8,098 persons and caused 774 deaths. Published estimates of the economic cost of the outbreak ranged from US\$30 billion to US\$140 billion, and the sectors that bore the brunt were the service and civil aviation sectors.

1.3 In view of the contagious nature of SARS, the World Health Organization (WHO) considered every country with an international airport as being potentially at risk of an outbreak. To contain further international spread of SARS, the WHO issued SARS travel advice and recommended new measures, including a screening procedure to identify passengers with possible SARS symptoms departing from a SARS affected country. The WHO also collaborated with IATA and ICAO to develop new measures aimed at preventing the spread of SARS via air travel.

#### **2. ICAO ANTI-SARS PROTECTIVE MEASURES AND HARMONIZED CONTINGENCY PHASED RESPONSE PLAN FOR AIRPORTS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES BY AIR TRAVEL**

2.1 Under the auspices of ICAO, an international working group comprising representatives from ICAO, IATA, WHO and Singapore, met in Singapore in June 2003 to develop anti-SARS protective measures for international airports and audit guidelines for ICAO inspectors. An audit was subsequently carried out by an ICAO inspection team on Singapore's Changi International Airport and China's international airports in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong in July 2003 and the airports were found to have fully implemented the ICAO recommended anti-SARS protective measures.

2.2 To better deal with SARS and similar infectious diseases that may evolve into a public health emergency of international concern, another international working group comprising representatives from ICAO, IATA, Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA), China and Singapore met in Singapore in November 2003 to develop for a n harmonized contingency phased response plan for airports. The contingency plan, based on recommendations from WHO and experiences drawn from the SARS outbreak, allows a phased response commensurate with the level of threat as determined by the WHO and covers various phases of the response system; specific triggers; command, communication and coordination; drills and exercises. The contingency plan was adopted by China and Singapore and both have implemented emergency phased response systems in their international airports.

2.3 The concept of a phased response to an outbreak of an infectious disease, that may evolve into a public health emergency of international concern, and guidelines for implementation of a harmonized contingency phased response plan for airports were presented by ICAO at the IATA/ WHO meeting in Geneva in November 2003. The meeting supported ICAO's inspection of the airport public health contingency capabilities in the SARS-affected areas. The meeting further decided to continue the work, begun by ICAO and IATA separately, on a Health Declaration Card to be used in case of a future public health emergency of international concern. The General Declaration (see Annex 9, APP 1-1) may also have to be updated to reflect current public health issues.

2.4 While the global SARS situation is now under control, the WHO has warned of possible recurrence of the disease, especially during the cold months. To prevent the spread of SARS or similar infectious diseases via air travel, we are of the view that Contracting States should be provided with adequate guidance on the anti-SARS protective measures and the harmonized contingency phased response plan to be implemented at their international airports. The ICAO anti-SARS protective measures and guidelines for implementation of a harmonized contingency phased response plan for airports should become part of the international Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs).

### **3. ACTION BY THE DIVISION**

3.1 The Division is invited to:

- a) note the work done to prevent the spread of SARS via air travel which is applicable to other similar infectious diseases as well;
- b) recognize the need to provide guidance to Contracting States to deal with future outbreaks of infectious disease, including SARS; and
- c) request ICAO to take the lead in developing international Standards and Recommended Practices based on the ICAO anti-SARS protective measures and the guidelines for implementation of a harmonized contingency phased response plan for airports to prevent the spread of SARS and similar infectious diseases via air travel.

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