



ASSEMBLY – 35TH SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 17: Enhancement of ICAO Standards

CABIN CREW AS SAFETY AND SECURITY PROFESSIONALS

(Presented by the International Transport Workers' Federation)

SUMMARY

The International Transport Workers' Federation, ITF, strongly believes that in the airline industry, certification should apply to parts (aircraft and associated systems), provider (training centers and repair stations) and personnel.

In all jurisdictions, the aircraft, training institutions, maintenance personnel, and pilots are certified. Certification, however, is no substitute for quality assurance of crew competence. Where cabin crewmembers are not licensed, the final side of the safety triangle, personnel, remains vulnerable.

An international requirement for cabin crew certification would mean each country's aviation authority would regulate the issuance and periodic renewal of a cabin crew license, in accordance with recurrent training requirements.

The ITF represents 600,000 unionised aviation workers in 120 countries, and speaks for more than one million aviation employees worldwide. The day-to-day safe and secure operation of air transport worldwide depends on their skills and commitment.

The ITF has been involved in the formulation and re-drafting of the ICAO cabin crew training manual.

The terrorist events of 2001 have led to an unprecedented crisis of public confidence in aviation safety and security. Whilst emergency financial assistance was given to airlines to overcome short-term economic difficulties, the long-term effects of the events, although difficult to calculate, risk undermining future growth of air transport services.

¹ English, French and Spanish versions provided by ITF.

It is crucial, for an orderly development of air services, to rebuild public confidence in a safe and secure aviation industry. An uninterrupted safety and security chain needs to be guaranteed.

More than ever, crewmember functions are changing significantly in ways that are not reflected in aviation regulation. While the commercial functions of crew fall outside the scope of regulation, the extent to which these functions might impact upon crew preparedness and ability to meet safety and security duties is not adequately addressed.

The role of cabin crew is increasingly incorporating in-flight safety management functions, such as crowd management and control, maintaining safety during routine operations, handling in-flight medical incidents, and responding to critical non-evacuation emergencies.

The duties of cabin crew have also broadened as a consequence of a number of systemic changes within the industry. For example, the shift from a three-person to a two-person cockpit, and the increasing use of performance-driven crew requirements in place of specific defined regulation, are just two examples of the new environment in which cabin crewmembers are expected to operate.

With recent security regulations that have required flightdeck doors to be locked at all times during flight, in most situations cabin crew are now the critical players in the case of an act of terrorism. The example of the recently uncovered “shoe bomber”, detected and incapacitated by cabin crewmembers, substantiates their role as the “last line of defence.”

Where certification is in place, cabin crewmembers are recognised as safety and security professionals; this affects their perceived authority when performing safety-critical tasks. The more emphasis placed on this authority by national and international government agencies, employers and passengers, the better cabin crewmembers will be at fulfilling this role.

Many Member States around the world already issue licences to their cabin crewmembers. This is the case on most continents (i.e. United States of America, several European Member States within the European Union and outside, Argentina and Chile in Latin America, others in Africa and Asia). A universal approach to licensing of cabin crew, however, has still not been realised.

To address this situation, the ITF believes that international requirements for cabin crew certification must be adopted.

A basic feature of any such programme is to require that licences be issued at no cost to the crewmember. Although there are expenses implicit in introducing licenses, for authorities and airlines these expenses are minimal in the context of overall state budgets and airline running costs. It is clear that there will be benefits that are likely to outweigh these costs.

Where there is no certification, if an experienced cabin crewmember changes employers, the crewmember must start training from scratch at the new airline. With certification, cabin crew would be licensed in their medical, security and safety roles to work on specific types of aircraft, regardless of the carrier.

Airlines could potentially save money by hiring seasoned professionals who only need a reduced initial training rather than the full initial training. They would also be able to tell at a glance which types of aircraft personnel have been qualified to work. The recent decision of the United States to require crewmember certification, and the procedure adopted by the US FAA to implement this requirement, demonstrates that such regulatory action need not be economically burdensome for operators or personnel.

Another benefit for airlines is that it gives them a competitive advantage, as passengers feel more reassured by their responsible approach to cabin crew safety and security professionalism.

The ITF believes that there needs to be a Standard requiring crewmember certification or licensing, equivalent to those for the licensed flightdeck, maintenance and air traffic services functions. This should be developed through the SARPs, and should be based on two principles already applicable to personnel licensing: that the certificate or license be vested in the individual, and that it be issued by or on behalf of the State.

Such a provision would complement any requirements for the certification of air operators or approval of training organisations, by guaranteeing individual as well as institutional competence, as is the case for maintenance engineers, pilots and air traffic controllers.

The ITF also believes that the guidance material contained in the advisory ICAO Cabin Crew Safety Training Manual, and referenced in other guidance material, such as that relating to security of aircraft operations, needs to be reinforced in order to establish some global uniformity in regard to minimum cabin crew competences.

In addition hereto, the ITF believes that this could be achieved through the development of PANS-type requirements (Procedures for Air Navigation Services) specifying minimum cabin crew competences, and containing technical material applicable on a worldwide basis. Such an approach is under active consideration within ICAO with regard to reform of flightdeck requirements, and we believe this approach could be applied with equal validity to cabin crew competences.

Action by the Assembly

The ITF invites the Assembly to:

- a) Introduce a basic Standard for cabin crew certification within Annex 1;
- b) Invite the Council and Air Navigation Commission to establish a timetable and structure for the development of PANS-type requirements for cabin crew competence;
- c) Invite the Secretary General to review the guidance material for cabin crew safety and security training and operations in the light of developments under a) and b) above.

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