



ASSEMBLY – 35TH SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 17: Enhancement of ICAO Standards

REVIEW OF AIR TRAFFIC SERVICE ROUTES

(Presented by South Africa)

SUMMARY

The airlines are trying desperately to reduce labour, fuel and other big-ticket costs to stay viable. This working paper proposes the review and rationalization of all ATS route structures contained in air navigation plans by PIRGs to identify any further possible savings to be made in flight times for users, which translates directly into financial and environmental benefits. It also calls for the implementation of all air routes contained in air navigation plans that contribute to a more efficient system and urges States to actively participate in the work of PIRGs in this regard.
Action by the Assembly is in paragraph 3.

REFERENCES

Doc. 9426, *Air Traffic Services Planning Manual*
Doc. 9833, *Report of the External Auditor*
Report of the Fourteenth Meeting of the AFI Planning and Implementation Regional Group (APIRG/14)
Doc. 9828, *Report of the Eleventh Air Navigation Conference*
Doc. 7300, *Convention on International Civil Aviation*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Fuel prices are driving up costs just as business is starting to return to normal after a number of events in the recent past that had a major impact on international civil aviation. Airlines that fly internationally are expected to pay US\$8 billion more for fuel this year than in 2003. The airlines are trying desperately to reduce labour, fuel and other big-ticket costs to stay viable.

1.2 One of the steps that ICAO can take to assist its aviation partners is to continue to ensure that the most cost-effective route between points of departure and destination is available. However, due to many conflicting demands made on the use of airspace by its many different users, as well as political, environmental and security considerations, it is frequently not possible to fly the most desirable route, and this adds to the additional fuel and maintenance costs incurred by operators.

1.3 The planning and implementation regional groups (PIRGs) established by the Council are responsible for ensuring the continuous and coherent development of the regional air navigation plans and monitoring and fostering their implementation, a task that has been very successfully accomplished.

1.4 The Eleventh Air Navigation Conference (Montreal, 22 September to 3 October 2003), through its Conclusion 4/1, emphasized the need to harmonize air navigation systems between regions. The conference noted that the PIRGs had made considerable progress in implementing communications, navigation and surveillance/air traffic management (CNS/ATM) systems and, in some cases, had worked interregionally to promote global initiatives. It was noted that these coordinated PIRG initiatives had brought about substantial benefits to both air traffic services (ATS) providers and users.

1.5 The conference also noted that the existing regional planning mechanism already provides the opportunity for States and PIRGs to advance capacity-enhancing procedures, a situation that can bring real benefits and savings to users and service providers.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Excellent examples of restructuring of air routes and the role played by ICAO's regional offices and planning and implementation regional groups exist in the introduction of a new route network that connect South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Europe (EMARSSH) which achieved significant quantifiable benefits due to ICAO's leadership. Flight times were reduced between Europe and Australasia on average by 30 minutes. This translated to an estimated 1% fuel saving, or 22.4 million kilograms of fuel, per year and a reduction in airline costs of US\$55 million per year. It also had a positive environmental impact.

2.2 Another good example of savings achieved through the restructuring of air routes is the establishment of the Cross-Polar Routes, which enable the flow of traffic between North America and the Asia Region, transiting through Russian and Canadian airspace, with both economic and environmental benefits. From PIRG reports, it is clear that there are various routes in the air navigation plans that are not implemented or aligned by States, which forces users to fly routes that are not at the optimum level of economic performance, a situation that can be ill-afforded.

2.3 To ensure that user resources are utilized to the maximum, it will be necessary for planning and implementation regional groups, in coordination with the users, to review ATS routes more frequently, taking new technologies into consideration to satisfy user requirements and produce additional savings. At the same time, the proposed changes should be coordinated on a regional basis before submission to ICAO for processing at the highest level.

2.4 Should the PIRGs identify routes where there appears to be a lack of political will for implementation, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Council of ICAO for immediate action. It should be recalled that Article 37 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation stipulates that Contracting States must undertake to collaborate in securing the highest practicable degree of uniformity in regulations, standards, procedures and organization in relation to aircraft personnel, airways and auxiliary services in all matters that will facilitate and improve air navigation.

2.5 In today's economic environment, any flying time that can be saved through optimized route structures is highly important to ensure financial viability of specific routes. With this in mind, it is proposed that planning and implementation regional groups be tasked with reviewing all air routes contained in the air navigation plans as a matter of priority to seek and propose additional savings that can be achieved in flight times.

3. **ACTION BY THE ASSEMBLY**

3.1 The Assembly is invited to:

- a) note the financial and environmental savings that have been achieved through the introduction of new or revision of the existing air routes;
- b) instruct the Council, as a matter of priority, to utilize the planning and implementation regional groups to identify possible further savings through rationalization of the air route structures;
- c) instruct the Council to urge States to actively participate in the work of PIRGs aiming at the rationalization of air routes; and
- d) instruct the Council to urge States to implement all air routes contained in air navigation plans that contribute to a more efficient system.

— END —