SUMMARY

The Seventh meeting of the Facilitation Panel agreed that an in-depth review of Doc 9636, *International Signs to Provide Guidance to Persons at Airports and Marine Terminals*, should be undertaken by the Working Group on Guidance Material (WGGM), with a view to updating Doc 9636, and defining whether new signage was needed, in light of the evolution of air and maritime transport since its publication. The Secretariat developed an interim report on the matter, for consideration by the WGGM. The report is attached, for information.

**Action by the FAL Panel:**

The FAL Panel is invited to consider the proposal described in paragraph 2.2 of this paper and agree that Recommended Practice 6.9 be amended, as suggested.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The Seventh meeting of the Facilitation Panel (October 2012) agreed that an in-depth review of Doc 9636, *International Signs to Provide Guidance to Persons at Airports and Marine Terminals*, should be undertaken by the Working Group on Guidance Material (WGGM), with a view to updating Doc 9636, and defining whether new signage was needed, in light of the evolution of air and maritime transport since its publication. In 2014, at the Eighth Meeting of the FALP, the WGGM presented an update on the work in progress (FALP/8-WP/9, refers). In 2016, at the Ninth Meeting of the FALP, the WGGM reported, inter alia, that both ICAO and the IMO had agreed to complete the work by mid-2017 (FALP/9-IP/4, refers).
1.2 In April 2016, the IMO’s Facilitation Committee, at its Fortieth Session (FAL 40/19, paragraph 11, refers), noted that the signs under consideration with regard to marine terminals were not safety-related and thus were already fit for its purpose. As a result, with regard to the joint publication, there was therefore little for IMO to do other than to validate the work of ICAO so that the outcome of ICAO’s work could go forward as a joint publication.

1.3 Accordingly, the Secretariat developed an Interim Report on the need to updated Doc°9636 and, in February 2018, submitted it to the members of WGGM for guidance on the way forward. The Interim Report is attached, for information.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 One WGGM member, the United States Panel Member, responded. The USA agreed with the conclusions presented in the Interim Review Report. It noted that as Doc 9636 is partially out of date, some adjustment to Recommended Practice 6.9 of Annex 9 would seem appropriate. In light of rapidly changing needs and circumstances, as noted in the report, and the continuing development of wayfinding guidance material which includes signage, it may prove impracticable to refer to a single guidance document in a Recommended Practice. It was suggested that Recommended Practice 6.9 should be revised to include reference to Doc 9636 to the extent it remains relevant and also refer to other sources of ‘best practices’ guidance material on wayfinding and signage. Rather than list the guidance material in a Recommended Practice or Appendix to Annex 9, which would then have to be amended frequently, ICAO could maintain a list of guidance material on its website, and continue to keep it updated as necessary.

2.2 Accordingly, the United States proposed that RP 6.9 be amended, as follows:

6.9 Recommended Practice.— Each Contracting State should utilize existing guidance material on wayfinding and signage, including ensure that signage used at airports is based on Doc 9636, International Signs to Provide Guidance to Persons at Airports and Marine Terminals, published jointly by ICAO and the International Maritime Organization, to the extent it remains applicable.

Note.— A non-exhaustive listing of ‘best practices’ guidance material and resources is maintained on the ICAO website at [. . .] for consideration and utilization by Contracting States.

2.3 The following documents were proposed as potential candidates for including in the ‘best practices’ guidance material reference list: (a) Federal Aviation Administration draft Advisory Circular 150/5360-13A on Airport Terminal Planning; (b) Federal Aviation Administration Advisory Circular 150/5360-12F on Airport Signing and Graphics; and, (c) ACRP Report 52, ‘Wayfinding and Signing Guidelines for Airport Terminals and Landside,’ issued by the Transportation Research Board. Additional sources and updates would be provided if this approach is endorsed by Panel, and subsequently incorporated into Annex 9.

3. RECOMMENDATION

3.1 In light of the above, and the attached Interim Report, the WGGM recommends that the Panel agree with the proposal set out in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3, above.
SUMMARY
The Seventh meeting of the Facilitation Panel agreed that an in-depth review of Doc 9636, *International Signs to Provide Guidance to Persons at Airports and Marine Terminals*, should be undertaken by its newly-established Working Group on Guidance Material (WGGM), with a view to updating Doc 9636, and defining whether new signage was needed, in light of the evolution of air and maritime transport since its publication. This paper presents an interim report, to the WGGM, on the review undertaken by the Secretariat of the need to update Doc 9636.

Proposed Action for WGGM:
The WGGM is invited to advise on the way forward.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 In the 1960s, with the continuing increase in air passenger traffic and the introduction of high-capacity aircraft, it became necessary to build new terminal buildings and, in some cases, to construct new airports. It was thus anticipated that in the larger airport terminal facilities, it would become more difficult for persons using airport terminals to locate the various facilities and services such as telephones, check-in counters, baggage claim areas, toilets and so on.

1.2 The question of developing an international sign language, without the use of words as far as possible, to assist travellers and other airport users, had been considered by several bodies and much study had been done on the subject. The desirability of developing a system of signs to meet the specific needs of air travellers was considered by ICAO. Subsequently, the Council agreed that an appropriate firm of consultants should be engaged to develop signs for the specific facilities and services, and in accordance with certain principles.

1.3 In March 1970, the Council adopted Doc 8881, *International Signs to Facilitate Passengers Using Airports*. It contained the set of signs described above, and it was hoped that they would be introduced at international airport terminals at the earliest practicable opportunity. Section I of Doc 8881 contained signs. Section II contained certain information concerning the use of the signs, their location, colours to be used, etc.
1.4 The Council’s decision to promote the uniform adoption of certain graphic symbols for easy location of the more commonly used facilities and services in terminal buildings was taken, in addition to the reasons given above, to provide guidance to the many airport authorities faced with increasing congestion in terminal buildings and having to modify or extend their facilities.

1.5 However, as airports had, at that time, signs of their own, the Council recognized that it would be unreasonable to expect airport authorities, at that stage, to undertake the expense of replacing such signs by the signs contained in Doc 8881. Nevertheless, as terminal buildings in many parts of the world were being expanded, new ones constructed and, in some cases, whole new airports being built, and as new signs were being installed for other reasons, the Council recommended that on such appropriate occasions the signs contained in Doc 8881 be installed.

1.6 In 1979, the Ninth Session of ICAO’s Facilitation Division (FAL/9) recommended that these signs should be reviewed, and a new version of the document be re-issued, deleting those which had not met with general international acceptance and incorporating new signs that had already received international recognition elsewhere.

1.7 FAL/9 also recommended that the matter of signs be reflected in Annex 9 — Facilitation. However, in light of the anticipated revision of Doc 8881, the Division advised that that document should not specifically be mentioned in the Annex. Consequently, the following new Recommended Practice 6.6 was incorporated into Chapter 6 of the 8th Edition (1980) of Annex 9:

**Recommended Practice.** — *International signs to facilitate passengers using airports, reproduced in the document developed for that purpose by ICAO, should be introduced at the earliest practicable opportunity.*

1.8 In 1980, a Study Group was accordingly formed, which proceeded with caution, being fully aware that the provision of signs at airports presented a heavy financial investment and that those States that had already committed themselves to the installation of the designs as recommended by Doc 8881 would suffer a substantial financial penalty if most or all those signs were to be rendered obsolete and had to be replaced by other signs. On the recommendation of the Group, ICAO agreed to delete nine signs from Doc 8881, to add four new signs and to modify some others. In 1984, new or revised signs were published as Doc 9430, and were intended for introduction at airport passenger terminals at the earliest practicable opportunity.

1.9 In 1987, the attention of the Facilitation Committee of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) was drawn to the ICAO publication Doc 9430. The IMO Committee considered most of the signs contained therein to be suitable for port use and agreed to consult with ICAO with a view to jointly publishing such signs and symbols for both marine and air terminals. In 1988, the Tenth Session of ICAO’s Facilitation Division recommended cooperation with IMO with a view to standardizing signs at international airports and marine terminals, based on Doc 9430.

1.10 In 1993, following extensive consultation and the development by IMO of a certain number of signs for marine terminals, the ICAO and IMO Councils approved a new edition of Doc 9430 as a joint ICAO/IMO publication which they believe will contribute to the uniform and worldwide adoption of signs at international airports and marine terminals. ICAO Council approval was, of course, limited to the signs for use at airports whereas IMO Council approval was limited to signs for use at marine terminals. In 1995, the joint document was published in London as ICAO Doc 9636 and IMO-370.
In 1995, the Eleventh Session of the Facilitation Division (FAL/11), recommended that the Recommended Practice (by then numbered 6.9) be updated to reflect the joint publication. Consequently, the following revised provision was incorporated into the 10th Edition (1997) of Annex 9:

**Recommended Practice.**— International signs to facilitate passengers using airports, reproduced in the document developed for that purpose entitled *International Signs to Provide Guidance to Persons at Airports and Marine Terminals* (Doc 9636) published jointly by ICAO and the International Maritime Organization, should be introduced at the earliest practicable opportunity.

In 2009, following a recommendation of the Fifth Meeting of the ICAO Facilitation Panel (FALP), the provision was amended to read as follows:

**6.9 Recommended Practice.**— Each Contracting State should ensure that signage used at airports is based on Doc 9636, *International Signs to Provide Guidance to Persons at Airports and Marine Terminals*, published jointly by ICAO and the International Maritime Organization.

This is the current text of the provision, as found in the Fourteenth Edition (2015) of Annex 9.

In 2012, at the Seventh Meeting of the FALP, European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC) invited the Panel to agree to a review of Doc 9636 (FALP/7-WP/12, refers). The ECAC noted that since the document’s publication in 1995, facilities, services and functions undertaken at airports had changed significantly, including in such key areas such as customs, police, border controls, Automated Border Controls, check-in and car parking. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to review the contents of Doc 9636 to ascertain whether existing signage still had relevance, and whether the introduction of new signage was appropriate. The ECAC thus proposed that a working group be established to review the content of Doc 9636 with a view to updating it, where this had become necessary as a consequence of the evolution of air transport since the publication of the document. Further, as it had been published jointly with the IMO, the revision work should be undertaken jointly with IMO.

Consequently, the FALP/7 meeting agreed to set up a Working Group on Guidance Material (WGGM) to address the review of Doc 9636, as well as to work on other Annex 9-related guidance material. The Panel agreed that, inter alia, the WGGM would undertake an in-depth review of Doc 9636, with a view to updating it, and defining whether new signage was needed, in light of the evolution of air and maritime transport since its publication. The Panel also agreed that the WGGM should conduct the task in cooperation with the IMO and other standardization organizations such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

In 2014, at the Eighth Meeting of the FALP, the WGGM reported that at a meeting of the group held in February 2013 in Singapore, three work streams had been established, with each taking on one of the three tasks assigned by the Panel (FALP/8-WP/9, refers). With regard to the review of Doc 9636, the IMO had been contacted, and it has expressed interest in participating in the review. It had also requested that the document be reviewed in time for its internal processes by March 2016. The WGGM thus anticipated that the review would be completed by that time, with a view to presenting the outcome at the Ninth meeting of the Panel.
1.16 In 2016, at the Ninth Meeting of the FALP, the WGGM reported, inter alia, that both ICAO and the IMO had agreed to complete the work by mid-2017 (FALP/9-IP/4, refers), as a result of a possible delay of the work in the both organizations.\(^1\)

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 As noted in paragraph 1.15 above, a meeting of the WGGM had been held in Singapore. During the meeting, ACI delivered a report on airport wayfinding and passenger perception. The presentation concluded by pointing out that with regard to signage, “one size does not fit all,” and that several tools help wayfinding, not just signage. ACI pointed out that a number of publications and best practices exist that assist airports in improving wayfinding, for example ACI’s Airport Service Quality’s (ASQ) Best Practice Report on Airport Wayfinding,\(^2\) and the (US Federal Aviation Administration-sponsored) Transportation Research Board’s Airport Cooperative Research Program’s (ACRP) Report 52, \textit{Wayfinding and Signing Guidelines for Airport Terminals and Landside} (2011).\(^3\) ACI thus suggested that ICAO might wish to address other priorities, instead.

2.2 The Secretariat’s subsequent research and analysis of the current status \textit{vis-à-vis} wayfinding\(^4\) and signage\(^5\) at airports confirms ACI’s input (paragraph 2.1, refers). It appears to be obvious that not only have airports (including their surroundings, such as parking facilities) grown tremendously, in the years since the first adoption, by ICAO, of guidance on airport signs (paragraph 1.3, refers) and even since the time of the joint ICAO/IMO publication (paragraph 1.10, refers), the culture related to the “airport experience” has changed dramatically and progressively over the decades. Signs used in international airports are much more extensive than Doc 9636 in terms of variety as well as number.

2.3 Doc 9636 served its purpose in the early years of passenger growth, as there was no other guidance available for promoting the uniformity of signs at international airports. However, the introduction and gradual increase of guidance material on wayfinding (including signage), available today to governments, to airport planners, to airport operators, and to airport users generally, guidance that often enables the provision of specific, bespoke wayfinding services for different international, regional and even national requirements at airports.

2.4 Additionally, international airports use signs in passenger terminals based on their own policies on signage or on reference materials issued by the industry. For example, a complete set of 50 passenger/pedestrian symbols developed by AIGA (the Professional Association for Design) is

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\(^1\) As the IMO FAL Committee was not going to consider the matter until the spring of 2016, the 39th IMO FAL Committee had agreed to inform ICAO of that decision and, in order to avoid any possible delay, to recommend ICAO to release their publication on international signs to provide guidance to persons at airport terminals, as appropriate. After FAL 39, the ICAO Secretariat had advised that ICAO would not complete its work until May 2016, and therefore ICAO could wait for the outcome of FAL 40: Report of the 40th Session of the IMO FAL Committee, at paragraph 11.1.

\(^2\) \url{http://www.aci.aero/Media/acifile/ACI_Priorities/CustomerService/ASQ%20Best%20Practice%20Report_Wayfinding.pdf}

\(^3\) \url{http://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/165910.aspx} “ACRP Report 52: Wayfinding and Signing Guidelines for Airport Terminals and Landside provides an up-to-date single resource for airport operators to consult as they review, update, enhance, or develop their airport wayfinding and signing plan. The guidelines focus on four areas of the airport: (1) roadways—both on-airport, and off-airport access roads; (2) parking; (3) curbside and ground transportation; and (4) terminal. In addition, the guidelines discuss developing a wayfinding strategy; the use of technology and visual displays; and color, fonts, and sizes. These guidelines are a handy resource for airport planners, consultants, and those specifically responsible for maintaining an airport wayfinding and signing plan and signage” (Foreword); ISBN 0309213460, 9780309213462.

\(^4\) “Wayfinding refers to information systems that guide people through a physical environment and enhance their understanding and experience of the space;” (see, \url{https://segd.org/what-wayfinding}). According to the ACRP Report 52, “the wayfinding experience in an airport environment is a self-guided journey.” Wayfinding is particularly important in complex-built environments such as airports and is critical for the occasional traveller and persons with disabilities and the elderly.

\(^5\) Included in the wayfinding “self-guided journey” are the signs that guide users through the airport environment.
available for all to use, free of charge. Supposedly royalty-free images are available at shutterstock.com. Other internet-based sources include sodafish.com and istockphoto.com. The UN World Tourism Organization published, in 2001, Tourism Signs & Symbols: A Status Report and Guidebook. Other ACI documents of specific interest are the Translations of Common Airport Passenger Terminal Signs (2nd Edition, 2014) and the Airport Passenger Terminal Signage in Asian Languages (2013). Regard is had to guidelines on signage developed by airports themselves, such as that of Narita Airport, Japan, indicating that such signage could be regulated under States’ national regulations. Finally, attention is particularly drawn to the work of the International Organization for Standardization’s (ISO) work in the area of signs. ISO 7001 (on public information symbols) defines a set of pictograms and symbols for public information.

2.5 Various other issues, in addition to the above, would need to be addressed, in order to update Doc 9636: a) copyright issues; b) duplication of work; c) difficulty in developing signs that can be applied uniformly at all airports; d) existing proliferation of signs at airports; and, e) “competing” with signs developed by other entities, such as ACI and ISO, and signs available freely or otherwise on the Internet.

2.6 In April 2016, the IMO’s Facilitation Committee, at its Fortieth Session (FAL 40/19, paragraph 11, refers), noted that the signs under consideration with regard to marine terminals were not safety-related and thus were already fit for its purpose. As a result, with regard to the joint publication, there was therefore little for IMO to do other than to validate the work of ICAO so that the outcome of ICAO’s work could go forward as a joint publication.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 The mandate of the WGGM is to update Doc 9636 that primarily addresses signs at airports. Other aspects of ‘wayfinding’ are beyond its mandate. The prevalent trend globally, as demonstrated in the paragraphs above, appears to be the development of material on ‘wayfinding’ that includes signage as well as other “information systems” that form a coherent whole for use at airports. Therefore, updating the guidance material on ‘signage’ alone would not serve Member States and the international airports today or in the near future.

3.2 In order to update Doc 9636, to include signs that apparently are needed today (paragraph 1.13 above, refers), would most likely give rise to the issues raised in paragraph 2.5 above. Online content, as well, is better able to react more rapidly to changing needs and circumstances, and thus better able to provide effective solutions to Member States on all matters relating to wayfinding, including signs at international airports.

3.3 Accordingly, it would be an inefficient use of scarce resources to engage in work that is more effectively and more thoroughly accomplished by other organizations and entities.

3.4 In light of the above, the WGGM is thus requested to advise on the way forward.

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6 http://www.aiga.org/symbol-signs.
7 https://www.shutterstock.com/search/airport+signs.