



ICAO

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North American, Central American and Caribbean Office

INFORMATION PAPER

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**North American, Central American and Caribbean (NACC) States Civil Aviation Authorities Directors  
General Virtual Meeting on COVID-19 Aviation Recovery and Restart**

14 April 2021

**Agenda Item 3: ICAO Assistance on COVID-19 Measures Implementation**

**ICAO COVID-19 OPERATIONAL MATTERS AND AIR TRANSPORT FACILITATION**

(Presented by the Secretariat)

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This paper presents a summary of the activities planned by the ICAO NACC Regional Office to address the main challenges related to the provision of air traffic services on the way to recovering pre- COVID-19 operational levels.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safety</li><li>• Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency</li></ul>
<i>References:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• P/05</li></ul>

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The declaration of the COVID-19 outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), in January 2020, immediately affected air operations worldwide.

1.2 Due to the nature and propagation of COVID-19, States across the globe implemented a number of control measures, including travel and operational restrictions, causing an almost total paralysis of the flow of passengers, affecting air operators, airports and related services.

**2. Background**

2.1 States and Territories of the NAM/CAR Regions implemented measures to reduce or prevent the spread of this disease; the context in which these measures have affected aeronautical operations has different implications. Almost all States closed their airports, gradually allowing the development of humanitarian and repatriation flights, landing in emergencies, and freeing cargo operations from these restrictions, for obvious reasons.

2.2 The lowest peak in traffic started between the end of March and the beginning of April 2020, where it was reduced to 90% as compared with 2019 figures. This peak continued in May-June, with a slight sustained recovery from July 2020. Air Traffic Services (ATS) provision continued, with limitations related to traffic reductions and restrictions imposed by public health authorities throughout the region. Contingency procedures were established and updated to address COVID-19 contagion.

2.3 The ICAO NACC Regional Office had to adapt its programme of activities to respond to the context being faced, planning new orientation activities and scheduling some activities, which could not be postponed, to be attended virtually. As a result, the 2020 work programme was successfully completed and work continues on this same approach so far in 2021.

### **3. Current situation and Activities for 2021**

3.1 With the progress of the vaccination process in United States, the forecasts for operations take a much more optimistic outlook toward a much-needed recovery for States and Territories in our region. Even though some States maintain the travel restrictions previously imposed, the majority begin to relax the measures triggering a slight increase in operations.

3.2 Despite the fact that air traffic is still significantly below 2019 statistics, there are peaks in operations that service providers adapt to attend quite well, implementing flexible schedules with additional staff for specific periods during the day. The NAM/CAR Regions Air Navigation Implementation Working Group (ANI/WG) Air Traffic Flow Management (ATFM) Task Force keeps monitoring the situation, having monthly discussions to evaluate the behaviour of traffic at a regional level and promote the necessary actions to allow an adequate evolution of operations.

3.3 Recurrent and on the job training are gradually restarted, while health related protocols are still in place and being enhanced. It is important to recognize the challenges that the current ATS personnel training and evaluation processes face, considering complementary activities to ensure that the personnel's competencies will respond to the expected conditions of air traffic operations. Accordingly, the ICAO NACC Regional Office, with the collaboration of United States, prepares a workshop to raise awareness of the ATS personnel training in a post- COVID-19 context.

3.4 In cases in which the vaccination process for ATS personnel has started, the model used by United States at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is the main reference, considering the voluntary application of vaccines and programming a rest period of 48 hours before scheduling operational work.

3.5 Concerning safety oversight, the situation is still very complex. Some States have indefinitely postponed their ATS surveillance activities, while a few have taken the experience of this past year to incorporate remote surveillance activities and other safety monitoring mechanisms.

3.6 The ICAO NACC Regional Office works in a project, in collaboration with Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, and United States, to develop guidance material for the establishment of safety oversight systems for air navigation services that consider the use of alternative mechanisms to carry out surveillance activities.

#### **4. Short and Medium Term Challenges**

4.1 In the short and medium terms, the main challenges some States and Territories will face concerning ATS are:

- the economic impact derived from the reduction in revenues;
- the maintenance of personnel competencies and the granting of ratings in reduced operation environment;
- completion of the annual surveillance activities and fulfilling State safety oversight responsibilities; and
- continue adapting to respond to different patterns in the increase of operations.

#### **5. Conclusion**

5.1 The COVID-19 pandemic will continue to impact aviation-related activities in the near future. Obviously, the road to recovery of operations will not be simple and undoubtedly, there will be new challenges that must be addressed based on cooperation and mutual collaboration.

5.2 The ICAO NACC Regional Office must continue adjusting its initiatives, in order to continue supporting the region in its recovery, incorporating and complementing activities to address emerging situations.

#### **6. Conclusions**

6.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a. take note of the information provided in this IP;
- b. raise awareness of the short and medium term challenges ATS providers will be facing and promote the cooperation and regional collaboration to agree the required actions;
- c. support the activities planned by ICAO in order to promote a safe and sustainable recovery of air operations; and
- d. take any other action deemed appropriate.