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Agenda Item 3: Status of Aviation Recovery and 2022 and new 2023-2025 Triennium Priorities for the NAM/CAR Regions

EXPERIENCE IN THE CENTRAL AMERICAN REGION ON THE CONTINUITY OF AERONAUTICAL SERVICES THROUGH COCESNA DURING THE COVID19 PANDEMIC

(Presented by Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, members of the Central American Corporation for Air Navigation Services - COCESNA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper summarizes the experience in the Central American Region, through the Central American Corporation for Air Navigation Services, the measures adopted to guarantee the continuity of COCESNA's aeronautical services during the pandemic while maintaining safety levels required by the Member States.

Action:	Under Section 6.
<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety• Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency• Security & Facilitation• Economic Development of Air Transport• Environmental Protection
<i>References:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• COCESNA I&E COVID19 Biosafety Protocol• COVID19 Action Plan for COCESNA essential personnel• COVID19 prevention policies PE-0086/2020• Circular PE-001/2020• Maintenance execution guidelines GT-031/2020• ODM treatment GT-039/2020

1. Introduction

1.1 The global crisis caused by the new COVID-19 coronavirus and its different variants has had an unprecedented impact on the aviation industry, and the Central American Region has been no exception. Maintaining the continuity of air navigation services while guaranteeing the required safety levels has been a challenge. This paper reflects how the Central American Corporation for Air Navigation Services is facing the new reality of the industry.

2 Background

2.1 In 2020, the COVID19 Pandemic, border closures and mobilization restrictions not only caused Central America to experience up to 90% reduction in operations and revenues compared to 2019. It also affected the execution of essential activities such as the provision of air traffic service; preventive maintenance of aeronautical equipment and systems at remote sites in the region; and in-flight inspection of radio navigation aids, among others.

2.2 This made it necessary to review the air navigation services management model and adequate policies and procedures to a continuously changing environment in order to maintain the required safety levels and increase operational and technical efficiency.

3 Air Traffic Service

3.1 In order to mitigate the possibility and impact of infection and the spread of the virus among air traffic controllers at the CENAMER control centre, biosecurity procedures and action plans were developed.

3.2 The Air Traffic Flow Management unit strengthened the exchange of information with airlines and adjacent ANSPs to develop forecasts of the number of operations expected in the long, medium and short term. With this information, a timetable is dynamically created to ensure a balance between demand and ATC capacity, while backup personnel are available in case of COVID-19 infection in CENAMER CONTROL's operational staff.

3.3 As a result, although there have been positive cases in the ATS personnel, it has not spread to the rest of the staff and, neither the continuity of the transit service nor the available ATS capacity of the control centre has been affected.

3.4 Additionally, through a collaborative decision-making process between airlines and adjacent ANSPs, it has been possible to implement measures to increase the efficiency of air operations, such as the authorization of more direct routes, generating savings for users and a reduction in CO2 emissions.

4 Aeronautical maintenance management

4.1 A comprehensive analysis of maintenance management was developed, taking into consideration the routines and the frequency with which they are executed in order to make changes in those cases that allowed it, thus ensuring the operability of the systems and complying with the availability and reliability requirements established by the industry.

4.2 Therefore, the monitoring and control remote systems of sites equipped with air navigation systems were reinforced to mitigate the effects of a reduction in on-site visits due to mobility restrictions in the region. This made it possible to perform many of the basic maintenance tasks of the communications, navigation, aeronautical surveillance, energy and meteorology systems remotely. In those cases where the analysis determined that the implementation of remote management was not feasible, on-site maintenance was maintained as established, making safeguard arrangements with local authorities so that technical personnel could be mobilized as essential service providers.

4.3 Ongoing monitoring of the systems and the results of the performance and safety indicators have demonstrated that the proposed changes have increased the efficiency of the maintenance management provided by the Corporation without affecting the required safety levels.

4.4 In the case of the inspection of radio navigation aids, it was necessary for COCESNA to establish biosafety procedures and protocols that adapt to the conditions and regulations of the States in the region, ensuring the welfare of COCESNA's aircraft crew and compliance with the applicable regulations to guarantee the optimal operation of Central America's radio aids.

5 Projects management

5.1 Proactively, COCESNA took measures to immediately reduce expenditures, reviewing the projects under execution of its 2016-2020 Integrated Investment Plan and freezing those strategic and operational projects that had not started and did not represent a commitment for the organization, leaving only those critical investments that already had a contract and were essential for COCESNA and the Member States.

5.2 COCESNA held meetings with stakeholders, including critical suppliers, to take additional extraordinary measures such as cancelling non-initiated contracts, freezing components of non-critical contracts, suspending and/or rescheduling activities for the years 2021 and 2022, and reviewing payment terms to improve cash flow. The support of suppliers in times of crisis was important for COCESNA, and the Member States, are grateful for all the cooperation provided.

5.3 Likewise, COCESNA approached financing institutions to improve financing conditions based on the Corporation's financial model, considering different revenue growth projections in conservative 48- and 36-month and optimistic 24-month scenarios, in order to safeguard the strategic reserve to guarantee the continuity of COCESNA's operations and those of the Member States, making informed decisions based on risk.

5.4 The challenge is enormous, today we continue to support the measures taken by the Corporation by controlling every dollar and making only those investments that are critical to guarantee the continuity of Air Navigation Services and to achieve the economic recovery that will allow us to develop a new Integrated Investment Plan for the implementation of operational improvements in accordance with the Global Air Navigation Plan and that are in line with the new reality and needs of the region, with a positive cost-benefit ratio so that no country in the region is left behind and we can emerge from this crisis.

6 Suggested actions:

6.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a. take into consideration the best practices and initiatives carried out by COCESNA in the Central American region for the efficient management of the air navigation services under its responsibility; and
- b. request ICAO to develop guidelines for responding to future events, in coordination with States and taking into account global experiences, in order to act as quickly as possible and with the least possible impact on aviation.