*International Civil Aviation Organization*
ICAO South American Regional Office
**Fourteenth Meeting of the Civil Aviation Authorities of the SAM Region (RAAC/14)**
(Santiago, Chile, 27, 28 and 30 October 2015)

**Agenda Item 4:** **Follow up on Bogota Declaration**

### ATC SLOTS AND AIRPORT SLOTS

(Presented by IATA)

| SUMMARY |
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| This working paper presents an overview of the misuses of ATC slots and Airport slots that can impact significantly in the ATFM Implementation in the Region |

| **References**: |
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| <br>- ICAO Doc. 4444<br>- ICAO Doc. 9426<br>- ICAO Cir283<br>- IATA WSG |

| *ICAO Strategic Objectives***:** | *A - Safety*<br>*D - Development of Air Transport*<br>*E - Environmental Protection and Sustainable* |
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1. **Introduction**

1.1 With the traffic increase in the region and growth of the demand, some airports are becoming congested to a level where the demand exceeds the capacity. To cope with this situation across the region, airports administrations and ANSPs are using airport slots and ATC slots however in some cases the duties and concepts are becoming mixed, resulting in some activities such as slot misuse moving away from the industries best practices as defined in the Worldwide Slot Guidelines (WSG).

1.2 The application of slots in most cases is started as a temporary solution to balance the capacity and demand, but after time, this turns into a permanent solution which reflects the lack of infrastructure development and effective timely planning.

2. **Discussion**

2.1 The proliferation of different ways to manage the airport slots and ATC slots in the region, can vary from simple excel formats to expensive and complex software from recognized vendors and home-made software and tools that are customized to apply any local rule. Nevertheless these last cases are impacting the users, by mixing the ATC slots with airport slots concepts.

2.2 The industry has learned a lot over the last few decades about the allocation and coordination of the Airport slots, and this learning is reflected in the -Worldwide Slot Guidelines, in order to avoid the coordination of slots being transformed into a patchwork quilt, with each coordinated airport applying different rules. The IATA WSG is recognized worldwide and applied at the busiest airports around the globe, providing the guidelines and the environment that the different participants need to follow to ensure the optimum use of the capacity and slots.

2.3        An airport slot is a permission given by a coordinator for a planned operation to arrive or depart at a Level 3 airport on a specific date and time.  An airport slot is only date and time specific for a particular airport, not a route, and is not route or aircraft specific.  The introduction of airport slots is recognized as a valid temporary means to balance the demand and capacity and at the same time, provides the predictability that the airlines needs to build their schedules. This predictability requires months of notification and the impact to the users when changes happen tactically by the ATC are important. For this reason it is crucial the liaison and open communication between the airport slot coordinator and the ATC/ATFM units.

2.4        This chart shows the timeline comparing the airport slots and ATFM slots

| | comparison timeline of work development | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | day of flight | 1 day before the flight | 2 months before the flight | 6 months before the flight |
| ATM (ATFM) | tactical operations | Pre-tactical planning | Strategic planning | |
| Airport slot - WSG | | | | 6 to 13 months before the flight |

2.5        It is important to emphasize that the process of assigning "airport slots" is a planning tool, while punctuality is operational, influenced by a myriad of subjective factors on the day, many of which are beyond the control of airlines. The internationally recognized best practice is to only use regularity in the determination of historical precedence and not operational punctuality. At least one State in the Region is crudely attempting to combine punctuality with regularity on use of the Airport Slots to penalize airlines when deciding historical precedent of series of slot or individual slots at coordinated airports.

2.6        The right to a slot is not linked to punctuality and neither should it be, as long as the intention of the carrier was to operate at the given time.  For a multitude of reasons flights do not always operate on time, often outside the carriers' influence. Causes include weather, airport closures, aircraft tech & maintenance issues, passengers, security and airspace related delays.

2.7        The globally recognised method of identifying and communicating causes of departure delays is found in IATA AHM730, as a list of codes developed by the aviation industry to understand the series of events that caused the delays. Its sole purpose is to identify where there are inefficiencies and bottlenecks that should be operationally resolved. It was never intended to be used to obtain the punctuality statistics, in order to penalize the airlines.

2.8        The index of punctuality (combining regularity and punctuality) is an ineffective measure, misguided and misaligned with the best international practices. The process of monitoring punctuality is extremely complex, bureaucratic and imprecise, creating a fertile field to administrative and judicial disputes.

2.9        The best industry practice is to use a Slot Performance Committee (SPC) to maintain performance and to question any operator who repeatedly and intentionally operates out of the parameters tolerated for an assigned slot. If the analysis of the behaviour of using the slot or slots series confirms the misuse, it is recommended to the Coordinator the removal of the slot.

2.10         The repeated lack of punctuality is specifically detailed in "WSG" with recommendations on how each airport should address this issue in the Slots Performance Committee (SPC), as a subgroup of the Coordination Committee. This process has demonstrated high efficacy and is widely used in capacity-constrained airports worldwide.

2.11         The industry does not reject the punctuality as a quality indicator. However, the way that it is being applied in at least one State in the Region is ineffective, because the rules are not objective, transparent, non-discriminatory and auditable.

2.12         The above practices seem to be spreading in the region, leading to the inefficient use of Airport Infrastructure, as well as to a lack of standardization in the ATFM Implementation.

2.13         In at least one state in the region, the airport slots are managed by the ATM/ATFM staff, and the tendency is to start mixing the two concepts and restricting traffic tactically is increased and these restrictions can vary from delays on the gate (even if there is no other traffic conflicting), to blocking the flight plan at the AFTN/AMHS.

2.14         According to ICAO CIR283, paragraph 2.12 states:

> *An airport slot should not be confused with an air traffic control (ATC) slot , the take-off or landing time of an aircraft which is assigned by the relevant ATC authority to make optimum use of available capacity at points en-route or at the destination airport by sequencing the air traffic to regulate its flow efficiently.*

2.15         In summary, the global best practice applied worldwide indicated the use of Airport Slots as a planning tool, to be applied in situations of proven airport congestion. The IATA WSG is recognized worldwide and can be used as a reference as the guidelines are being used in all the busiest airports in the world. The ATC Slots are a tactical tool, to be used in unexpected imbalance situations between demand and capacity. The ATC Slot has precedence to the Airport Slots on day-to-day operations.

3.         **Suggested action**

3.1         The Meeting is invited to:

a)    Take note of the information provided in this working paper;

b)    Urge SAM States to adopt the best international practices on the use of Airport Slots, using IATA WSG as a reference; and

c)    Ask SAMIG to establish a clear definition on Airport and ATC Slots and the standardization of the ATC Slots application in the Region.

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