



ICAO

Fifth Meeting of the African Air Navigation Services Providers

(Lomé, Togo, 28 March - 1st April 2022)

Agenda Item 4: Air Navigation Services (ANS) and the COVID-19 pandemic

ANSP perspectives Challenges and recovery Strategies

(Ghana.)

SUMMARY	
This working paper presents some perspectives on how Ghana managed the challenges of the COVID 19 Pandemic. It also discusses some recovery strategies which have been implemented to improve the situation as well as to ease the adverse effects of the pandemic on our operations.	
Action by the Meeting can be found in paragraph 4	
REFERENCE(S)	
<i>Strategic Objectives</i>	Related ICAO Strategic Objective (s): A – <i>Safety</i> , B – <i>Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency</i> , D – <i>Economic Development of Air Transport</i>

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 It has been more than two years since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 pandemic a Public Health Emergency. The human and economic development of every country in the world experienced unprecedented decline due to the pandemic.

Ghana, as a country was not spared the impact of COVID 19 especially in the provision of Air Navigation business.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1.1 Ghana as a State took some actions with the view to managing the spread of the COVID-19 virus. On 22nd March 2020, the country's air, land and sea borders were closed. This implied that the volumes of aircraft movement came down drastically.

2.1.2 Most of the aircraft movement were limited to evacuation, humanitarian, cargo, and emergency flights. For the purposes of this discussion, we would share how COVID-19 and its associated challenges affected the following areas of our business:

- Aircraft Movement
- Management of Personnel
- Contingency
- Impact on Finance
- Recovery strategies

Attachment

2.2 Aircraft Movement

Air Travel numbers drastically declined from March 2020, as compared to pre-COVID level for same periods in 2019. This is attributable to restrictions on both international & domestic air travels due to the pandemic.

There was a 54.68% reduction in flight movement in 2020 as compared to its equivalent period in 2019. Enroute traffic was down by 46.6% in 2020 as compared to its equivalent period in 2019.

By September 2020 however, some level of recovery was noticed as restrictions on air travels eased gradually. This was made possible due to the strict protocols put in place at the Kotoka International Airport (KIA).

2.3 Management of Personnel and working environment for core ANS operations

To control the exposure of personnel to the Corona virus and the consequent health and safety risk to workers, a ‘work-from-home’ policy was instituted for majority of the staff. Only essential service staff were allowed to work in-person and on a rotation basis. Due to the reduction in traffic volumes, Air Traffic Control sectors were combined leading to reduction in staff strength and numbers on watch duty, to adhere to the social distancing protocols. Also, a standby (Contingency) Watch was in place to step-in if a member of a watch tests positive for COVID -19, to allow the whole watch to be withdrawn for testing and treatment.

2.4 Contingency plans

Emergency ACC and Tower were established as a fall back if the need arose for the complete evacuation of the main ACC and Tower. Our team run constant trials to establish the readiness of the emergency facilities to take over operations when the need arose. This involved the updating of our operational procedures to accommodate the switch to the emergency facilities when the need arose. These procedures were simulated and rehearsed from time to time to ensure that, the turn-around times were within safe limits.

2.5 Impact on Finance

As was the case with most industries, our finances were severely affected by the pandemic. Our revenue for 2020 saw a downward decline of about 51.9% as compared to 2019.

3. Recovery strategies:

3.1 The Ghana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) in collaboration with the Ghana Airports Company Limited worked with Airlines to provide flexibility within their operational framework to help manage and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 where appropriate.

Attachment

3.2 Air Traffic Controllers and other operational and technical staff were taken through refresher courses and training to bring them up to required levels of recency to handle the increase in traffic levels.

3.3 The Government of Ghana also assisted by providing the aviation sector with some level of financial support in the form of reliefs in order to sustain the operations of the industry.

3.4 A COVID-19 testing regime was put in place at the Kotoka International Airport, to avoid the spread of the virus as well as build passenger confidence. All arriving passengers were tested on arrival. Departing passengers were also required to undergo a COVID 19 PCR test within 72hours of their planned departure. All this was done in collaboration with the Airlines, Managers of the Airports, Ministry of health and other key stake-holders. The success of this intervention has largely been due to the massive cooperation from all Airlines and service providers.

3.5 Enhanced COVID-19 protocols such as the wearing of face mask, washing of hands regularly, social distance and the use of alcohol sanitizers were put in place at every part of our operation.

3.6 Mandatory COVID-19 vaccination of all employees was instituted. Steps were also taken to ensure adherence to this mandatory Covid -19 protocols.

3.7 Decongesting of offices, working from home policy and down-sizing of personnel were all strategies that were implemented to reduce the rate of infection within our organization.

3.8 Contingency facilities were also created with associated procedures to implement when such major pandemic occurred as discussed in 2.4

3.9 Regular disinfection of all offices and operational facilities.

4 ACTION BY THE MEETING

The meeting is invited to:

- a) take note of the actions taken by Ghana to manage the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic;
- b) encouraged other ANSPs to share their experiences with the view to making the ANSPs better equipped for future situations;
- c) Encourage other ANSPS to employ some of the mitigation factors if not in place.