Fifth Meeting of African Air Navigation Service Providers
(Lomé, Togo, 28 mars -1ˢᵗ April 2022)

Agenda Item 4: Air navigation services and the COVID-19 pandemic

WP/07/PPT: ASECNA's strategy to ensure continuity and recovery of activities

(Presented by ASECNA)

SUMMARY
This working paper focuses on the strategic orientations taken by ASECNA to ensure business continuity during the Covid 19 pandemic and highlights the multidimensional actions deployed to contain its adverse effects and prepare for the resumption of air traffic.   The meeting is invited to note that the implementation of innovative and efficient means are required to compensate human failure when adversity tends to reign. The ANSPs' investment plans must clearly identify the priority projects that contribute to the resilience and must be carried out despite the circumstances from those that serve the growth and adaptation of the ANSP which can be deferred.

REFRENCE(S)	Annex 11
Strategic Objectives	This information note is related to strategic objectives A and B

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   In 2020 the World Health Organization declared the occurrence of the Covid 19 pandemic which caused serious global health concerns. There has been a drastic drop in the volume of air traffic due to restrictions imposed by States on travel and lockdowns.

1.2   ASECNA, which has jurisdiction over 6 flight information regions covering 17 countries in West Africa, Central Africa and Indian Ocean, recorded a drop of nearly 70% in its overall traffic compared to the same period of the previous year.

1.3   In accordance with the provisions of Annex 11 of the ICAO's Chicago Convention which stipulates that States must provide air navigation facilities and services in the airspace for which they are responsible, including during emergency situations, ASECNA therefore had to provide air navigation services to ensure the continuity of the air transport industry's activity with **the same level of safety.**

2.   DISCUSSION

2.1.   Like all other ANSPs, ASECNA carried out during 2020 and 2021 a permanent review of traffic forecasts in order to guarantee the provision of safe and optimized air navigation services. Thus, 4 main priorities have been defined to allow the continuation of activities.

Priority 1: Sovereign mission to ensure at all costs.
In line with this priority, ASECNA took extraordinary measures to ensure the health of its employees during this period in order to ensure a maximum level of continuity in the provision of air navigation services and to maintain connectivity between the Flight Information Regions (FIRs). Special passes were granted to ASECNA to continue to fulfill its mission and facilitate the movement of its staff because as ANSP it had to provide a public safety service.

Priority 2: Specific measures taken to ensure the provision of operational services
This priority included actions relating to the operational functioning of control centres and covered several elements such as: the strengthening of local supervision, matching traffic forecasts with staff dedicated to operations, refresher training and the use of distance learning technologies for the theoretical part, the derogations requested from regulators with regard to licenses and others, information to users in coordination with the States, communication with partners (adjacent ANSP, IATA, ICAO, CANSO, etc.), specific air traffic management procedures and the introduction of direct scheduled trajectories in flight plans, testing of contingency means etc. Finally, we can also mention special authorizations granted by the States to ensure the in-flight calibration of air navigation aids and procedure

Priority 3: Cost reduction (OPEX/CAPEX)
Under this priority, the objectives were mainly focused on the revision of ASECNA's five-year investment plan, the revision of staff travel classes, the postponement of initial training, the introduction of e-learning with appropriate technologies, the shifting of dates for refresher and recurrent training. This action required long and sometimes stormy consultations to identify the priority level of the project and its repercussions on operations in order to decide on its removal, postponement or reprogramming.

Priority 4: support to airlines and restart preparedness.
allowed us to take a decision to grant a significant deferral to the airlines for the processing of invoices and to anticipate the measures to be taken in the event of a restart of the activity.

2.2   The control of the pandemic situation at the Agency comes from, among other things, the implementation of surveillance of its entire airspace using ADS/B technology. Indeed, in January 2020, ASECNA began using space-based ADS-B which had been in trial since 2018. Thus the reduction of the number of staff due to the social distancing was immediately supplemented by a better air traffic situational awareness.

2.3   Consistency in monitoring the evolution of the pandemic and traffic forecasts at ASECNA allowed for early preparation for the resumption of operation. Even if the 2019 traffic level has not yet been reached in our airspace, the consequent increase is managed due to the anticipatory measures taken, in particular coordination with the States, airlines, airports and many others. These measures concerned health measures (compliance with the provisions promulgated by the States), human resources (competence, training, sensitization), coordination with airport managers and the military, the systematic carrying out of safety impact studies, and the establishment of a single supervision and monitoring center at ASECNA's Headquarters.

2.4   The management of this health crisis has highlighted at the level of ASECNA several challenges among which we can mention : the need to develop services such as ATFM, the use of innovative technologies and services for the needs of ATM such as the implementation of AIDC (ATS interfacility Data Communication), the search for innovative ways of training ATS staff and the introduction of e-learning (With issues such as theoretical versus practical activities, stable internet connection and training of trainers etc.)

2.5   Annex 1 below summarizes the measures taken by ASECNA according to the areas of activity to prepare for the resumption of activities.

3   ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1   The meeting is invited to note that the implementation of innovative and efficient means are required to compensate human failure when adversity tends to reign. The ANSPs' investment plans must clearly identify the priority projects that contribute to the resilience and must be carried out despite the circumstances from those that serve the growth and adaptation of the ANSP which can be deferred.

Annex 1: Measures taken by ASECNA to prepare for the resumption of activity

Measures	Implementation strategy
Relieving companies' finances	Companies are given a two-month deferral to pay their bills. (March invoices will be paid in July 2020)
	nil penalties will be applied on 2020 on airlines
Reduced airline flight time (save time)	ASECNA's publication of air traffic service procedures developed to enable airlines to benefit from direct routes, flexible routes, and random routes to have more optimal trajectories (reduced operating costs and economies of scale for users).
Information from users and stakeholders	Issue of NOTAM and AIC
	Technical meeting with IATA
	Dissemination of relevant circulars
	Information from all other stakeholders
	Information from its staff
Coordination of recovery actions	The Agency takes part in all coordination meetings and webinars initiated to draw lessons from the pandemic. ASECNA is often invited to share its experience in view of its size and its sixty years of experience as an ANSP.
ATM capacity upgrade	Calibrations of air navigation aids
	In-flight validation of instruments flight procedures
	Major maintenance of remote stations
Licenses and qualification of personnel	States were requested to extend for 90 days the validity of the licenses of the controllers while awaiting the medical visits impossible to carry out for the moment
	ASECNA will launch the experiment of online tests to check the English level of the controllers.
	Local qualification training continues
	States have been seized to extend the validity of firefighters' medical skills by 90 days (SYGICOP).
Safety impact assessment	Safety impact assessments are launched in each representation (Hazards Identification and Risks Assessment)
Reduction of charges within ASECNA	reduce internally charges and operate at a minimum level.
	Saving budget measures have been taken with regards to operations; investments and salary costs.
	Supression of new appointment. No recruitment. No mobility between States. Reduction of fuel using.