



ICAO

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Agenda Item 4

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Agenda Item 4: Presentations – State / Industry / ICAO (Issues arising from the COVID-19 Pandemic could be a focus for the WP/IP)

SHARING EXPERIENCE ON MANAGING THE SAFETY RISK BY IMPLEMENTING CONTINGENCY PLAN IN ANSPs AGAINST COVID-19

(Presented by the Republic of Korea)

SUMMARY

This paper highlights the successful experience of the Republic of Korea (ROK) on safety risk management against COVID-19 by issuing an operational directive for air navigation service providers (ANSPs) to ensure non-stop provision of air traffic service. Also, the ROK requests this paper to be shared among member States for further improvement which could be sustainably applied to this on-going crisis.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Annex 19 requires service providers to ensure that an emergency response plan (ERP) is properly coordinated with the ERPs of those organizations that they must interface with during the provision of their products and services. Recognizing the importance of ERP of the service providers, international standards for sector-specific ERPs are also established in several Annexes by different terms such as contingency plan. One of them is the *Annex 11 – Air Traffic Service* requiring air traffic service providers (ANSPs) to develop and implement contingency plans for events of disruption, or potential disruption of air traffic services.

1.2 Under the global spread of COVID-19 pandemic, the possibility of mass infection of the virus could also exist at the air traffic control facilities where more than 5 to 20 people work simultaneously on a daily basis. If confirmed or suspected cases are reported, the ATC facility concerned is likely to be out of service for disinfection and encounter the lack of manpower due to self-quarantine requirement. The Republic of Korea (ROK) consider this pandemic could lead to potential shut-down of ATC facilities, and it could be the most significant safety risk for aircraft operation within the Incheon Flight Information Region (FIR). To manage this safety risk, the Korean government has issued an operational directive to its ANSPs to set up new procedures related to contingency actions against COVID-19 as a part of their safety management system (SMS).

1.3 With such proactive measures taken at ATC facilities, Korea has seen no report of confirmed case from over 500 air traffic controllers and has succeeded in providing 24hrs non-stop ATC service to all aircrafts operating in the Incheon FIR. Therefore, this information paper aims to share ROK's experience on COVID-19 related contingency plan for the ANSPs with the regional member states.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 According to the ICAO *Doc. 9859 (Safety Management Manual)*, an emergency is defined as a sudden, unplanned situation or event requiring immediate action. Coordination of emergency response planning refers to planning for activities that take place within a limited period of time during an unplanned aviation operational emergency situation. An ERP is an integral component of a service provider's Safety Risk Management process to address aviation-related emergencies, crises or events. Where there is a possibility of a service provider's aviation operations or activities being compromised by emergencies such as a public health emergency/pandemic, these scenarios should also be addressed in its ERP as appropriate.

2.2 In this context, the Korean government recognizes this pandemic situation as a safety risk for the service providers. Change management has become the main issue for service providers having SMS overall but for the ANSPs, the contingency plan was also a big issue as it could be fully inoperative when having confirmed cases among its aviation personnel. In this regard, the Korean government has decided to develop an operational directive for the ANSPs focused on the preparatory part for precautionary measurements and the contingency part for immediate action regarding on COVID-19. The operational directive consists of four phases as follows:

- a) Preparatory phase 1: Measures to prevent the infection of Air Traffic Control Officers (ATCOs) on duty. The facility is strictly open to ATCOs and essential technical personnel only. All ATCOs are subjected to pre-duty fever test. Controllers are required to wear face masks on duty and facilities and personal devices such as microphones are periodically disinfected;

Note - Even the request from the Vice Minister of MOLIT to visit the control tower to check on the quarantine status of Incheon International Airport was declined to rule out any possible contamination from outside sources.

- b) Preparatory phase 2: If there is any suspect case or any ATCOs who came into contact with confirmed patients, the controller concerned is removed from the duty and put into quarantine forthwith. It is a phase preparing for the contingency team operation or shift to contingency facility operation;
- c) Contingency Phase 1: Declared if a controller in the facility is confirmed as a patient. All team members of the confirmed ATCO are subjected to self-quarantine and health authorities conduct diagnostic tests, and ATCOs are transferred to the contingency facilities to continue providing services while having the main control facility disinfected forthwith. A new roster is drafted with new pairs of controllers who have been confirmed negative in diagnostic tests or made no contact with the confirmed patient; and
- d) Contingency Phase 2: Declared when there are multiple confirmed or self-quarantine cases. This phase allows temporary alleviation of the requirements of ATCO ratings. Alternative resources including military personnel who pass the competency assessments are assigned for each facility. A limitation is imposed to air traffic capacity and if there is a lack of alternative resources, available personnel are reassigned to a few prioritized facilities (Area Control Centre, Seoul Approach Control and etc.) to remain them functional and other facilities are withdrawn from services.

2.3 As the world is about to restart and recover its aviation system, the non-stop ATC service is expected to become more important for maintaining safety be in proportion to its increasing volume of air traffic. The Korean government views that there is still a long drive ahead to overcome this extraordinary time and remains committed to reviewing its operational directive mentioned in paragraph 2.2 for further improvement.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) Note the provided information and experience of ROK regarding the COVID-19 related contingency plan for the ANSPs; and
- b) Share experience with member States on COVID-19 related contingency plan for ANSPs for further improvements.

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