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**The Combined Tenth Meeting of the South Asia/Indian Ocean
ATM Coordination Group (SAIOACG/10) and Twenty—
Seventh Meeting of the South-East Asia ATS Coordination
Group (SEACG/27)**

Video Teleconference, 29 March – 02 April 2021

Agenda Item 6: ATM Contingency Plans and Search and Rescue

**AIRLINE FEEDBACK TO MYANMAR CONTINGENCY RESPONSE
AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINGENCY PLANNING**

(Presented by IATA)

SUMMARY

This paper presents international airline feedback on the recent Myanmar airspace contingency response and emphasises the importance of contingency planning for all States.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Yangon FIR was subject to a contingency response between 8 February 2021 and 16 February 2021 due to the unavailability of ATC Services.

1.2 The contingency response generally proceeded without significant problems due largely to the existence of a pre-prepared Contingency Plan distributed by Myanmar DCA.

1.3 Despite the existence of the plan, there were still some items of confusion in the Plan's instructions and some difficulty obtaining clarification of those issues. There was also feedback from Airspace Users and adjoining States with proposals for improving the efficiency of the contingency procedures.

1.4 The event was a good reminder for all States to have relevant, updated and practiced Contingency Plans in place at all times.

2. DISCUSSION

Myanmar Contingency Response

2.1 The Level 2 Myanmar ATS Contingency Plan (CP2) was activated as a result of the Yangon FIR being subject to an unavailability of ATC Services between 8 February 2021 and 16 February 2021.

2.2 The CP2 provided instructions for international overflights to operate on specified contingency routes at allocated Flight Levels, and to follow a set of prescribed contingency radio frequency procedures.

2.3 Notice of the contingency response was by communication with adjoining FIRs prior to the event and then immediate activation by NOTAM. There was also earlier warning by the existence of a preceding NOTAM advising additional separation requirement due lack of ATC staff.

2.4 Whilst the majority of the contingency period ran smoothly, interpretation of some of the frequency instructions was confusing, plus the limited number of available levels and 15-minute longitudinal standard requirement created more inefficiencies than Airspace Users saw as necessary.

Summary of feedback from airlines

2.5 Positives:

- Availability of a pre-published Contingency Plan
- Contingency routes were established quickly
- Good communication with neighboring ANSPs about opening additional non-standard tracking around the entry and exit points
- Crews reported lack of ATC enroute service in Myanmar as expected, however the coordination by adjacent States was effective
- Flights continued into Yangon Airport without impact

2.6 Challenges:

- Limited number of contingency routes and Flight Levels
- Enroute holding, as a result of the above points and also due the requirement for 15-minutes separation between flights entering Yangon FIR
- With respect to frequencies, there was confusion as to what the TIBA frequency was (123.45, 121.5 or area ATC VHF) and on which frequency/ies to make the mandatory position broadcasts
- Restrictions in communications networks within Myanmar made it difficult to obtain timely clarification from DCA for some of the issues raised or to propose improvements to the procedures, or for flight approvals
- Lack of updates regarding possible holding from neighboring FIRs which would assist airlines in planning
- Ending of the contingency response was confused by the NOTAMs issued and cancelled

2.7 Additional Costs:

- Additional fuel for possible holding; started with 30 minutes and then 15 minutes
- Additional cost when flying at lower levels on the contingency routes
- Because of unknown enroute delays, many flights carried more fuel than necessary
- Example reports from airlines:
 - One airline advised they included additional fuel (1500kg) for wide-body aircraft and minimum 5% contingency fuel added during the period
 - Another airline calculated additional USD18,200 for the period of contingency

2.8 Recommendations for Improvement:

- Designate more contingency routes and Flight Levels
- Strengthen communication paths with contacts within Myanmar that can be approached during similar contingencies.

- Neighboring FIRs to consider providing advisories about expected delays for entry into Yangon FIR and if time permits, utilise methods other than airborne holding / orbits. This could include applying ground delays or inflight speed reductions

2.9 Overall, the Myanmar contingency response worked effectively despite some issues that can be easily addressed and/or clarified. Whilst some issues were mitigated by the lower traffic numbers due COVID-19, Myanmar DCA is still to be commended for having the Level 2 Contingency Plan prepared for such a situation.

Contingency Planning

2.10 The positives and the challenges highlighted from the recent Myanmar contingency response reminds us of the importance of every State having relevant, updated and practiced Contingency Plans in place at all times.

2.11 Contingency Plans are multi-layered depending on the causal events and the commensurate response required at any time. Development of Contingency Plans should always include affected stakeholders to ensure all impacts and risks are considered.

2.12 Because a Contingency Plan dictates the operating procedures during the response, the Plan should always have a current Safety Assessment so that the inherent procedures don't create elevated or unmitigated risk, particularly during the critical periods of entry to and exit from the contingency response.

2.13 A Contingency Plan should also consider the possibility that the type of event (e.g. natural disaster) may cause severe and sometimes full disruption to normal public communications modes such as land / mobile phone networks and the internet. Consequently, the Plan should detail the other means by which communications can be maintained during the contingency period.

2.14 Contingency Plans and their associated Safety Assessments should be reviewed annually and updated as required. As a Contingency Plan is often activated within short notice, table-top and/or simulator exercises ensure that all who will participate in the response remain current in the Plan's procedures and operations.

2.15 Where the contingency response will affect airspace up to adjoining FIR borders, neighboring States must be consulted in the Plan development as well as annual reviews. Letters of Agreement must also be enacted and current so that all affected States are very clear on the version of the Plan that is current and to be activated.

2.16 IATA remains available for coordinating international airline input into the development and annual review of States' Contingency Plans.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in this paper;
- b) discuss any relevant matters as appropriate; and,
- c) take action to ensure updated Contingency Plans are prepared.

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