



International Civil Aviation Organization  
*Asia and Pacific Office*

**Thirteenth Meeting of the Asia Pacific Accident Investigation Group  
(APAC-AIG/13)**

*(New Delhi, India, 30-31 October 2025)*

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**Agenda Item 5: Regional cooperation**

**INVESTIGATION COOPERATION MECHANISM FOR GROUP OF ISLANDS**

*(Presented by France)*

**SUMMARY**

This working paper provides information regarding Investigation Cooperation Mechanism developed in Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority (ECCAA) region.

Action by the APAC-AIG is in paragraph 3.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The Caribbean region presents a diversity of national regulations stemming from the different histories and structures of the countries within it. Seeking harmonization of these regulations on specific issues, like in accident investigation domain with France, would promote the development of safe air routes between these territories and the creation of technical partnerships. All of this would contribute to improving operation safety in the region and, by extension, to the economic and tourist development of the area.

1.2 The cooperation of ECCAA with France covered support for Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority (ECCAA), on behalf of the civil aviation authorities of the member States of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), and the identification of areas for improvement in their regulatory framework in relation to ICAO standards.

1.3 One particular area identified by France DGAC in the region and ECCAA for regulation and cooperation, is a potential development of a suitable regional Investigation Cooperation Mechanism (ICM).

1.4 The objective of this WP is to highlight a comprehensive analysis of the need for the establishment of an ICM. Future version of ICAO manual Doc9946 is expected to provide all necessary information regarding the procedures to be followed for the establishment of an efficient ICM.

## 2. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

### 2.1 Discussion

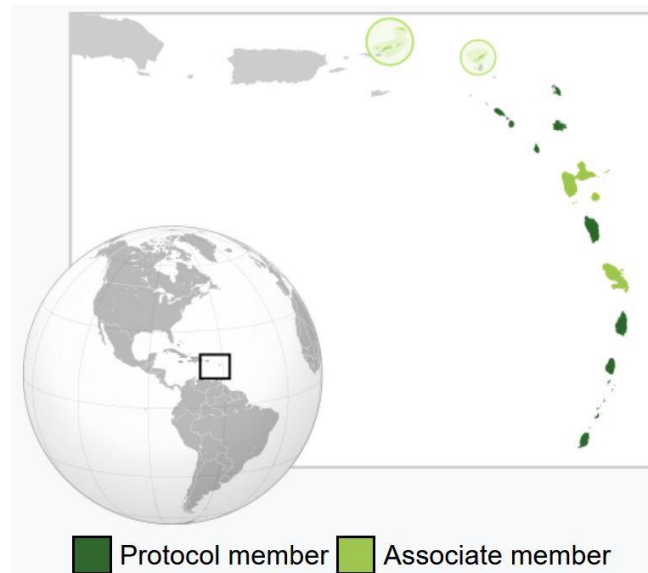
2.1.1 The OECS is an International Inter-governmental Organization dedicated to regional integration in the Eastern Caribbean. Regional Integration is when countries in close proximity who share physical or cultural characteristics with each other, come together to achieve common goals.

2.1.2 OECS is a Regional Grouping of 12 islands in the Eastern Caribbean.

State	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population	Government
Seven OECS members			
Antigua and Barbuda	440	100,000	Unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy (Charles III)
Dominica	754	75,000	Unitary dominant-party parliamentary republic
Grenada	344	113,000	Unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy (Charles III)
Montserrat	102	4,400	Sovereign State UK AAIB UK in charge of accident investigations
Saint Kitts and Nevis	261	48,000	Government Federal parliamentary constitutional monarchy (Charles III)
Saint Lucia	617	179,000	Government Unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy (Charles III)
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	389	111,000	Government Unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy (Charles III)
Four OECS associated Members			
British Virgin Islands	153	30,000	Government Parliamentary dependency under a constitutional monarchy (Charles III) AAIB UK in charge of accident investigations
Anguilla	91	16,000	Parliamentary dependency under a constitutional monarchy (Charles III) AAIB UK in charge of accident investigations
Martinique	1,128	362,000	Sovereign State France BEA in charge of accident investigations.
Guadeloupe	1,628	384,000	Sovereign State France BEA in charge of accident investigations.
Saint-Martin (French part)	53,2	26,300	Sovereign State France BEA in charge of accident investigations.

2.1.3 The ICAO website ([www.icao.int/safety/AIA](http://www.icao.int/safety/AIA)) contains a list of Accident Investigation Authorities (AIA) Contact Information around the world. Up-to-date information is important for international visibility and to facilitate contacts with accredited representatives in the framework of an accident investigation.

2.1.4 Those members of OECS regulated by Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority (ECCAA), namely Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines rely on ECCAA for accident investigation.



2.1.5 The UK AAIB is responsible for accident investigation of all UK Overseas Territories, including the following full and associate member of OECS: Montserrat, Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands. The BEA France is responsible for accident investigation of all French Overseas Territories, including the associate member of OECS: Martinique and Guadeloupe.

2.1.6 The list of accidents in the region has been analyzed. It has not been possible to find if accident investigation final reports have been published for all the accidents. Seven reports covering the period 2006-2018 can be consulted on the website: [http://www.eccaa.aero/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=175&Itemid=90](http://www.eccaa.aero/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=175&Itemid=90)

2.1.7 ICAO Annex 13 paragraph 5.4 specifies that AIA shall have independence in the conduct of the investigation and have unrestricted authority over its conduct, consistent with the provisions of this Annex. The investigation shall include the completion of the final report. A final report made publicly available is important for the worldwide improvement of safety in aviation.

## 2.2 ICAO Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme audits

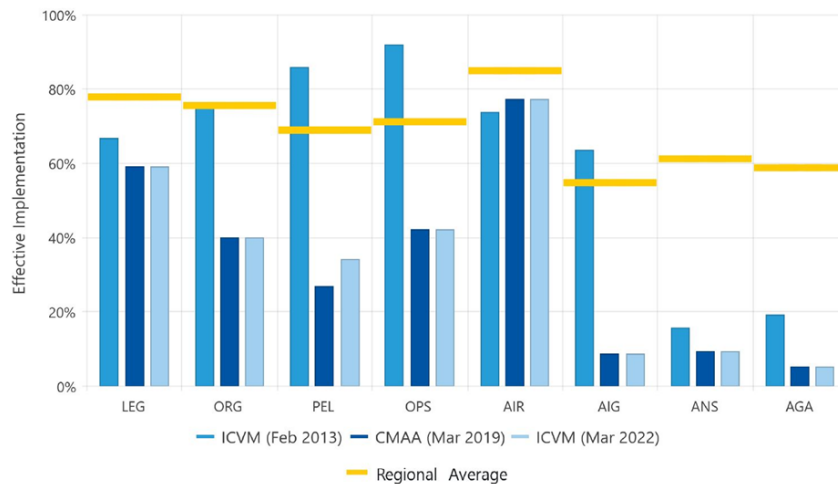
2.2.1 ICAO's Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) focuses on a State's capability in providing safety oversight by assessing whether the State has implemented the critical elements (CEs) of a safety oversight system effectively and consistently. This enables the State to ensure the implementation of ICAO's safety-related Standards and Recommended Practices (SRPs) and associated procedures and guidance material. In addition, it provides ICAO with a means to monitor continuously the States' fulfilment of their safety oversight obligations.

2.2.2 In 2007, a full scope USOAP audit was conducted by ICAO in the OECS region. An ICVM was then conducted in 2013 to close the findings. The results in AIG domain were superior, at that time, to the regional average in the ICAO North American, Central American and Caribbean (NACC) region with 63 % versus 57 % for NACC of satisfactory answers to the protocol questions (PQ).

2.2.3 In 2019, a full scope USOAP audit was conducted by ICAO in the OECS region. The results in AIG domain are now very low with 8.53 % of satisfactory answers to the protocol questions (PQ). The results are shown under level of Effective Implementation (EI). EI is a measure of the State's safety oversight capability, calculated for each critical element, each audit area or as an overall measure. The EI is expressed as a percentage. Any change in the status of a PQ for a State will lead to an update of the State's EI.

2.2.4 For information the EI for France on the AIG domain is 100%.

2.2.5 The following chart shows the EI in the various ICAO audit areas. The chart details the results from the various audits in 2013, 2019, 2022.



### 2.3 Investigation Cooperation Mechanism (ICM)

2.3.1 ICAO USOAP audits have highlighted that many States do not have the resources necessary to investigate the full range of aircraft accidents and incidents and to carry out thorough analyses of the accident and incident data received. For such States, the establishment of an ICM, Regional Accident Investigation Organization (RAIO), or the creation of a regional pool of qualified investigators, may be a solution to achieving the effective implementation of an investigation and prevention system.

2.3.2 For the investigation of major accidents in States which do not have the resources to carry out the investigation, other interested States (e.g., the State of Registry, State of the Operator, State of Design or State of Manufacture) may assist and provide support to the State of Occurrence. However, assistance and support, such as the delegation of the whole or part of the investigation to another State, does not relieve the State of Occurrence from its responsibility to institute an investigation and to complete a final report of the investigation. Similarly, many States lack the capability to investigate non-major accidents or incidents, in accordance with Annex 13. For many of those States, the establishment of an ICM may be the only reasonable option to enable the establishment of an effective accident and incident investigation and prevention system that meets the States' obligations.

2.3.3 It is important for States wishing to establish a regional accident and incident investigation system to formulate a strategy that is well-defined in terms of purpose, objectives, activities, output, result indicators, duration and expected results.

2.3.4 Prior to the establishment of an ICM, it must be ensured that Member States are committed to fully support the ICM in all aspects, including procedures and the allocation of adequate resources to allow involvement for accident and incident investigations.

2.3.5 One important aspect to be discussed is the sovereignty of the States for the conduct of an accident investigation. Cooperation in this respect does not mean that governments should give up their sovereignty, authority or responsibilities. However, participation in a regional arrangement may present an effective and efficient means for a State to achieve the desired level of accident and incident investigation.

2.3.6 The term Regional ICM is broader than RAIO and permits to develop a network of Accident Investigation Authorities (AIA). The final project of ECCAA is to create a Regional Accident Investigation Authority (RAIA) called AIG Unit. Nevertheless, a temporary ICM with the creation of network of AIG point of contact in each ECCAA State was found suitable to cover fulfill Annex 13 accident investigation obligation.

## 2.4 **Proposal of ICM in the ECCAA region**

2.4.1 The OECS is exposed to major investigations following accidents on large transport aircraft due to the large number of airports in the region with Commercial Air Transport international flights. Moreover, being comprised entirely of islands, these states may face accidents over water, introducing additional complexity to the safety investigation processes.

2.4.2 From the information collected, it seems not realistic for each independent States to develop an independent AIA as promoted by ICAO SARPs. Thus, the development of Regional ICM in the area of accident investigation may be appropriate until the implementation of the AIG Unit.

2.4.3 The European Network of Civil Aviation Safety Investigation Authorities (ENCASIA) was established in January 2011 with the entry into force of Regulation (EU) No 996/2010 on the investigation and prevention of accidents and incidents in civil aviation. ENCASIA has developed the European Mutual Support System (EMSS) to improve aviation safety investigations through support and assistance to its members. If one of the European State is facing a major accident of large transport civil aviation aircraft, this State will be able to request help to ENCASIA members and will receive support from those States.

2.4.4 The idea of RAIO is attractive on the ECCAA region. Unfortunately, without the provision of suitable finance, resources and political agreement the reality is somewhat less favorable. Ironically, the regions where regional groups are often advocated are those where these requirements are already in short supply. In addition, if the investigator in charge is coming from a different State than the State of occurrence it may lead to sovereignty issue. Based on the BEA experience, the State of occurrence facing a major event in most of the time will lead the safety investigation.

2.4.5 The ICAO NACC Regional Office has initiated activities to strengthen the safety and security oversight systems of the Eastern Caribbean ICAO Contracting States. The AAIB UK and BEA France are already responsible for accident investigations in some of the member States of the OECS. Coordination with the ICAO NACC Regional Office, the BEA France and the AAIB UK is crucial in determining the most efficient system to enhance the capability of the OECS in managing a high-profile accident investigation.

2.4.6 To achieve the goal of preparing the ECCAA to conduct a major accident investigation, the development of responses to the ICAO USOAP Continuous Monitoring Approach (CMA) protocol questions (PQ) on a self-assessment basis in the Annex 13 area is essential.

2.4.7 The ICAO NACC AIG Project already promotes the development of legislation, regulation and procedures to comply with the ICAO Audit protocol questions in the region. The cooperation project between ECCAA and France supports the ICAO cooperation program with consistent actions for the development of those procedures. The development of primary legislation is of equal importance, but it is a more long-time process that may go beyond ECCAA and France cooperation program.

2.4.8 One achievement of the project is the sharing of the best practices of the European Mutual Support System. It is essential to build mutual support between all ECCAA States to keep the sovereignty of the State of occurrence, with the primary objective of ensuring that any civil aviation accident, wherever it occurs in the region, will be properly investigated, and that lessons to prevent reoccurrence will be learned and shared. All this will be made possible through the active participation of the investigators identified in the region and the political involvement in each State. They represent an investment in terms of time but in return, they have helped to develop aviation safety investigations in the ECCAA Region.

## 2.5 **Short term proposal: creating AIG focal point network in ECCAA States**

2.5.1 In Europe, the coordination role of safety investigation authorities has been recognized and reinforced. That recognition and reinforcement is best achieved by the ENCASIA, with clearly defined role and tasks for the cooperation. In the light of the operation of the ENCASIA, the development of a regional ICM in ECCAA region may be well appropriate for efficient accident investigation system.

2.5.2 The European network was created by the European Regulation N° 996/2010. However, the same European regulation requires the development of a permanent and independent investigation authority in each European State. Nevertheless, formalizing such a network of permanent and independent investigation authorities is not adapted for ECCAA region States. The size of the ECCAA States and CAA is too small for an independent accident investigation authority with permanent staff. To make an AIA effective, the size of AIA shall be linked with the number of events to investigate yearly. The list of accidents in the ECCAA region supports the facts to not have permanent and independent AIA in each ECCAA member State.

2.5.3 It is estimated that in the ECCAA region, the network would not be composed of directors of safety investigation authorities but of clearly identified individuals from ministry of transport or civil aviation in each ECCAA State. These individuals should hold sufficiently high positions to understand the functioning of the States at both political and judicial levels.

2.5.4 Two investigators have been identified in the region: one from Dominica and one from Saint Kitts and Nevis. Once the network will be in place these two investigators will be the ones conducting the investigations on behalf of the ECCAA Members States as acting investigators with the agreement from Dominica and Saint Kitts and Nevis.

2.5.5 In the case where one of the ECCAA Members State is the State of Occurrence for a civil aviation accident or serious incident, the Members State will request the assignment of one or both investigators to manage the safety investigation. This assignment should be performed under the agreement on Cooperation between the ECCAA Member States. In such case, the investigators' travel and subsistence expenses will be borne by the State of Occurrence.

2.5.6 The proposal for this short term and first step improvement in the AIG domain for ECCAA would be on one hand to rely on a small team of fully qualified investigators and on the other hand to be able, in case of occurrence of an accident and a related investigation, to mobilize people from the focal point network to deal with political, judicial and mediatic topics.

2.5.7 In the context of developing ECCAA Network of Civil Aviation Safety Investigation Focal Points (ENCASIFP), meetings were organized with the identified investigators. All the civil aviation acts are very similar to each other and provide a foundation for conducting safety investigations in each ECCAA State.

2.5.8 Establishing the network of safety investigations focal points in each ECCAA State does not necessarily require regional regulation. Of course, similar to what has been done in Europe, it would be preferable to have regulation, but it is not essential. The establishment of this network would be facilitated by a code of conduct defining the operating methodology of this network. With this goal in mind, a number of documents were shared:

- Rules of procedure for the ENCASIFP. The intent for the Safety investigation focal point of the Member States of ECCAA, is to adopt rules of procedure having regard to: establishing between them a Network of Civil Aviation Safety Investigation Focal Point; strengthening and developing cooperation between them; conducting investigations entirely independently; consulting ECCAA.
- Framework document for ECCAA Mutual Support System (EMSS). The aim of this Framework document is to provide ECCAA accident investigation focal point with guidance, check lists, and templates in order for them to produce: a National Investigation Management Plan, ECCAA EMSS procedures for requesting and providing help. In accordance with the EMSS this working group shall prepare procedures for requesting and providing help among ECCAA Member States in view of ensuring that each State will be able to fully perform an investigation, with the assistance of other Member States where relevant.

#### 2.5.9 **Training plan**

2.5.10 In the framework of the cooperation project between ECCAA and France, a Coordination of safety investigations training course was performed on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024 by video conference to ensure the efficient development of the ENCASIFP. The aim of the half-day training course was to ensure coordination of safety investigations with the media, judicial and political authorities. The intended audience was Individuals identified in each ECCAA State to perform the coordination of safety investigations (38 people).

2.5.11 After an introduction done by the ICAO NACC Regional Director, the programme addressed the following items:

1. Introduction from ICAO NACC Regional Office
2. France-ECCAA cooperation program and scope of the training (BEA)
3. State Responsibilities in regard to ICAO Annex 13 investigation (BEA)
4. AIG Unit Formation and Transition (ECCAA)
5. Structure of AIG Unit (Designates, AIG State Focals) (ECCAA)
6. Role of AIG Unit Designates (ECCAA)
7. Role of AIG State Focals (ECCAA)
8. ECCAA Mutual Support System (EMSS) (BEA)
9. Underwater sea searches (BEA)
10. SAR issues (French SAR)
11. Challenges of communication (BEA)

**3. ACTION BY THE AIGP**

3.1 The APAC-AIG is invited to note the development of Investigation cooperation mechanism in the ECCAA region,

3.2 ICAO is invited to evaluate the benefits of developing similar ICM in APAC region.

— END —