



International Civil Aviation Organization

ICAO

**Thirteenth Meeting of the Air Traffic Management Sub-Group (ATM/SG/13) of APANPIRG**

Singapore, 25 – 29 August 2025

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**Agenda Item 5: ATM Systems (Modernization, Seamless ATM, CNS, ATFM)**

**IMPORTANCE OF ATC READBACK AND HEARBACK**

(Presented by Pakistan)

**SUMMARY**

This paper reflects the importance of ATC readback and hearback and highlights the actions taken by Pakistan to ensure compliance with ICAO standards on the subject. Pakistan adopted the standards into National Regulations, issued a guidance material for ANSP (which includes a checklist as a tool) and developed ATM Inspector Checklist to verify the compliance.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Communication between controllers and pilots and airside drivers is vital for safe and efficient flight operation. The importance of readback of ATC clearance and other safety related instructions is well established and recognized. Clear, unambiguous, timely, and uninterrupted communications followed by proper readback/hearback are crucial to the efficient and safe management of air traffic. Not surprisingly, communications problems constitute a factor in many flight safety incidents. The compliance of ICAO Annex 11 *Air Traffic Services* requirements for readback/hearback is therefore essential to ensure safety.

**2. DISCUSSION**

2.1 ICAO Annex 11 paragraph 3.7.3 describes the requirement for flight crew and airside drivers to readback safety related parts of ATC clearance and instructions respectively. It also requires controllers to ensure proper hearback to identify any discrepancy in readback and taking necessary corrective action.

2.2 ICAO USOAP CMA PQ edition 2024 has following Priority Protocol Question (PPQ) on this important subject to verify state compliance.

**Table 1: ICAO USOAP CMA 2024 Priority Protocol Question (PPQ)**

PQ No.	Protocol Question	Guidance for Review of Evidence	ICAO References	PPQ	CE
7.119	Does the State ensure compliance with the standard phraseology and the requirements for readback?	1) Review the mechanism established to ensure effective implementation. 2) Review documented evidence of requirements for readback of ATC clearances and use of standard phraseology.	STD A11 3.7.3 A10 Vol. II, 5.1.1.1 & 5.2 PANS Doc 4444 (ATM) 4.5.7.5 & C12 GM Doc 9432	Yes	CE-7

2.3 Pakistan CAA has transposed Annex 11 into National Regulations using Air Navigation Order “ANO-002-ARAN” and has adopted this standard into its National Regulations. Considering the importance of subject, guidance material for ANSP through an Air Safety Circular (ASC) on the topic of “*IMPORTANCE OF READ BACK OF ATC CLEARANCE AND OTHER SAFETY RELATED INSTRUCTIONS*” “ASC-005-ARAN-1.0” has been issued, which can be accessed through PCAA website <https://pcaa.gov.pk/regulatory-publications/daar-airspace-and-air-navigation>.

2.4 The safety circular describes the pilot-controller communication loop and specifies the importance of ATC readback for air crew and other safety related personnel and its subsequent hearback requirements by air traffic control. It reflects National Regulations, describes the various reasons as to why readback hearback errors occurs such as use of non-standard Phraseology, lack of radiotelephony (RT) discipline, expectation bias, call sign confusion, language barriers, accent variations, high rate of speech, complacency, frequency congestions, high workload etc. It also describes how readback hearback errors affect the safety such as runway incursion, loss of separation, loss of situational awareness, heading/track deviation, controlled flight into terrain (CFIT) or near CFIT, airspace infringement etc.

2.5 The safety circular also contains a checklist for ANSP (refer to **Appendix A** of this paper) to use as a tool to verify the compliance by Air Traffic Controllers both from the pilots and airside drivers readback/hearback perspective on random basis.

2.6 In order to verify the compliance of ICAO Standards and National Regulations, ANS Inspector has also been provided with a separate checklist to record the compliance status from ANSP through use of this tool and randomly listening to the playback of recorded radiotelephony (RT) in different ATS units such as aerodrome, approach and area control centers.

### **3. ACTION BY THE MEETING**

3.1 The meeting is invited to note the information contained in this paper.

## APPENDIX A

### CHECK LIST FOR ANSP

#### Readback of ATC Clearance & Other Safety Related Information

Call sign	Date/Time (UTC)		Whether ATCOs passed correct clearance/safety related information		Does Pilot read back the Clearance/safety related information	Any discrepancy revealed during read back	Controller Action to correct the read back error	Comments (if any)				
	From	To	Element	Content								
Aircraft Call Sign	Phase of flight		ATC Clearance/Instructions									
			ATC Route Clearance									
			SID/ STAR/ Type of Approach (as applicable)									
			SSR									
			Level/Altitude									
			Heading									
			Speed									
			RWY in use									
			QNH (Altimeter setting)									
			Other									
			Clearance & Instruction to	RWY								
			Enter									
			Hold short									
			Take off									
			Cross									
			Backtrack									
			land									
			Conditional clearance (if any)									
Vehicle call sign			Clearance & Instruction to	RWY/TWY	Does Airside driver read back the Clearance/safety related information							
			Enter									
			Hold short									
			Cross									
			Operate									
			Other									

**Note:** Observe whether controller check the read back against the flight strips notations to ensure that the message the pilot received was the correct one.

Name/Rank : \_\_\_\_\_ Signature/Stamp: \_\_\_\_\_  
(checklist filled by)