



ICAO

International Civil Aviation Organization

Thirteen Meeting of the South China Sea Task Force Review Group (SCSTFRG/13)

Beijing, China, 16 – 18 July 2025

Agenda Item 2: Review of the Current and Planned CNS/ATM Capabilities and Identifying Associated Reduced Horizontal Separation

PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE OPERATIONAL TRIAL OF 20NM LONGITUDINAL SPACING ON AIR ROUTES L642 AND M771

(Presented by Hong Kong, China)

SUMMARY

The enhancement of longitudinal spacing on air routes L642 and M771 is agreed and listed as one of the Priority action items in the region. During the SAIOSEACG/2 and SCSTFRG/11 meetings conducted in 2023, all concerned States/Administrations, i.e. China, Singapore, Vietnam and Hong Kong, China expressed full support in implementing 20NM longitudinal spacing on L642 and M771. As a result, during the SAIOSEACG/3 meeting conducted in April 2024, a trial operation proposed by Hong Kong, China was agreed and scheduled to be commenced on 7 May 2024.

This paper presents a progress update on the operational trial of 20NM longitudinal spacing on air routes L642 and L771 and a proposal for a full implementation to all concerned States/Administrations.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Hong Kong, China is committed to optimising the capacity of air routes within the Hong Kong Flight Information Region (FIR) and the APAC Regions, including major trunk routes L642 and M771. The plan to enhance the longitudinal spacing between aircraft operating along L642 and M771 was well conceived among major stakeholders. Through close collaboration and discussions among all concerned States/Administrations as well as support by IATA, an operational trial of 20NM longitudinal spacing was agreed to be commenced since May 2024. The objective of the trial operation was to provide opportunity for ACCs of concerned States/Administrations and airline operators to collect data during the use of new spacing requirement, to accumulate experiences and assess its benefits. The trial has been continuing since then, positive feedbacks were received by airline operators in terms of the increased route capacity and assignment of optimal cruising levels. As air traffic is recovering in the APAC Regions, it is opportune for the consideration of a full implementation, to get prepared for the robust air traffic growth in the long run.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 An operational trial was commenced since 7 May 2024 and agreed that 20NM minimum longitudinal spacing would be applied on L642 and M771 from 0200 to 1200 UTC daily during the trial period, subject to the following conditions:

- a) Aircraft cruising at or above FL290;
- b) Aircraft equipped with serviceable ADS-B; and
- c) Longitudinal spacing between two aircraft are constant or increasing.

2.2 It was also agreed that aircraft without serviceable ADS-B operating on routes L642 and M771 shall cruise at FL280 or below, unless prior approval was obtained from the relevant receiving ATCC/ACC.

2.3 Although the trial period was agreed to be between 0200-1200UTC daily, it was observed that ACCs of the concerned States/Administrations coordinated among themselves to extend the period of application since January 2025. The trial period was extended from 10 hours daily to 12 hours (0200-1400UTC) then gradually increased to 14 hours (0200-1600UTC) and 16 hours (0000-1600UTC) during February to early April. Further extension to 22 hours (0100-2300UTC) was noted on few occasions from April onwards.

2.4 The application was suspended occasionally in May 2025 due to the implementation of LSWDCP which ACCs would require a larger spacing due to weather deviation and ATC capacity issue. The overall acceptance of the new spacing was demonstrated and all concerned States/Administrations were generally ready and willing to further extend the duration of application as observed.

2.5 It is obvious that the route capacity has been increased significantly, more optimal flight levels could be assigned to operators to optimise fuel efficiency and reduce carbon footprints. The project was supported by all concerned States/Administrations. No adverse comments had been received and the trial operation was proven successful. It is therefore recommended to all concerned States/Administrations to consider a full 24-hour implementation of the 20NM longitudinal spacing on L642/M771, with amendment and signing of the revised LOA to be completed by December 2025.

2.6 The full implementation of 20NM longitudinal spacing on L642 and M771 is a crucial step towards optimising air traffic capacity within the APAC Regions. The full support of all concerned States/Administrations marks a significant milestone to this initiative. Hong Kong, China will collaborate and encourage all concerned States/Administrations to continue their coordination and action with an aim of achieving this initiative as soon as possible.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in this paper and the progress of the trial;
- b) request other concerned States/Administrations (i.e. China, Singapore and Vietnam) as well as IATA to update any progress or provide any comments on this trial;
- c) consider a full implementation and complete signing of relevant documents and LOAs by end of 2025; and
- d) discuss any relevant matters as appropriate.

Decision SCSTFRG/13-x – FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF 20NM LONGITUDINAL SPACING ON AIR ROUTES L642 AND M771	
What: Concerned States/Administrations should consider a full 24-hour implementation of the 20NM longitudinal spacing on ATS routes L642/M771, with amendment and signing of the revised LOA to be completed by December 2025.	Expected impact: <input type="checkbox"/> Political / Global <input type="checkbox"/> Inter-regional <input type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ops/Technical
Why: The full implementation of 20NM longitudinal spacing on L642 and M771 is a crucial step towards optimising air traffic capacity within the APAC Regions. The full support of all concerned States/Administrations in SAIOSEACG/2 meeting marked a significant milestone to this initiative.	Follow-up: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Required from States
When: 1-Dec-25	Status: Draft to be adopted by Subgroup
Who: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sub groups <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> APAC States <input type="checkbox"/> ICAO APAC RO <input type="checkbox"/> ICAO HQ <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	

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