International Civil Aviation Organization

The Thirteenth Meeting of the South China Sea Traffic Flow 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

UPDATES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR REDUCED LONGITUDINAL SPACING ON ROUTES N892 AND L625 WITHIN THE MANILA FIR

(Presented by PHILIPINES)

SUMMARY

This document outlines the background and the current progress of the plan to implement reduced longitudinal spacing on routes N892 and L625 within the Manila FIR, including tentative timelines, and the operational requirements necessary to support the initiative.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The initial plan for optimizing routes N892 and L625 involved the operationalization of a new ATC sector by February 2020. This development was a prerequisite for implementing reduced longitudinal spacing on the said routes. Following coordination and mutual agreement with Taipei ACC and Ho Chi Minh ACC, an operational trial was scheduled to commence in March of 2020.

1.2 However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic imposed unforeseen restrictions, leading to the indefinite postponement of the implementation. A reassessment of the plan took place in August 2021 and revealed several critical deficiencies, including a diminishing workforce, shortage of rated controllers, a decline in trainers and subject matter experts, limited ADS-C/CPDLC-qualified personnel, and unresolved documentation issues. Consequently, the implementation was further deferred to allow for the resolution of these challenges.

1.3 In 2024, Manila ACC hosted a bilateral meeting with Singapore ACC, while a separate meeting with Ho Chi Minh ACC was hosted by Vietnam. Discussions focused on the tentative timeline and operational trial plans for reduced spacing on routes L625 and N892, respectively. During both engagements, Manila ACC conveyed its intention to resume preparations for operationalizing the new ATC sector by the first quarter of 2025.

1.4 Pending the successful establishment of this sector—anticipated in the fourth quarter of 2025—the operational trial for reduced longitudinal spacing is expected to proceed. This is contingent upon the finalization of draft procedures and continued coordination with Taipei ACC and Ho Chi Minh ACC.

1.5 The application of 30 and 50 NM reduced longitudinal spacing is not new to Manila ACC operations. However, prior implementations were comparatively less complex. The optimization of routes N892 and L625 presents a distinct set of challenges, as substantial segments of these routes within the Manila FIR traverse Category R airspace. Addressing this would necessitate the implementation of new operational procedures and the establishment of an additional air traffic control

sector. Consequently, this undertaking would entail significant investments of time in training programs for rated controllers, as well as a substantial augmentation of the existing workforce.

2. DISCUSSION

Updates on the relevant activities and timeline of implementation

2.1 Preparatory activities for the establishment of the new ATC sector are progressing steadily. The training program, which is identified as the most critical preparatory activity, is currently ongoing, with over half of the scheduled sessions already completed. The tentative target for the operationalization of the new sector is in December of 2025.

2.2 Following this, Manila ACC plans to commence the trial implementation of reduced longitudinal spacing on routes N892 and L625 in March 2026, initially applying 50NM longitudinal spacing as the minimum. This trial is expected to span at least six months. Subject to the outcome of the trial evaluation, Manila ACC may proceed with the adoption of 30 NM as the minimum longitudinal spacing during the full implementation phase.

2.3 As discussed with CAAS and VATM/CAAV in 2024, the following requirements have been identified for the application of reduced longitudinal spacing on routes N892 and L625 within the Manila FIR:

a. Turbojet aircraft operating at or above FL290.
b. Longitudinal spacing minimum of 50NM between RNP10-approved aircraft and 30NM between RNP4-approved aircraft.
c. Longitudinal spacing is constant or increasing.
d. FANS 1/A ADS-C/CPDLC with emphasis to J5, J6 or J7.
e. RCP240 and RSP180.

2.4 Optimized longitudinal spacing shall be suspended upon activation of the Large-Scale Weather Deviation (LSWD) contingency procedure or when required due to other operational constraints, following prior coordination by affected units.

2.5 As a number of aircraft operating along these routes are not yet equipped to support optimum longitudinal spacing in Category R airspace, Manila ACC plans to apply the “Best Equipped, Best Served” principle. This approach will prioritize operators with advanced capabilities, enabling them to access more efficient flight levels in accordance with their equipage.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

a) note the information contained in this paper; and

b) discuss any relevant matters as appropriate.

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