



International Civil Aviation Organization
Asia and Pacific Office

Fourteenth Meeting of the Asia Pacific Accident Investigation Group (APAC-AIG/14)

(Bangkok, Thailand, 7 - 9 October 2026)

Agenda Item 4: Enhancing Accident Investigation Capabilities

CAPABILITY BUILDING-CONDUCTING AN ANNEX 13 INVESTIGATION AS A REGULATOR

(Presented by Tonga)

SUMMARY

As a result of Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) assistance to Tonga Civil Aviation Office (TCAO) for a recent accident, the ATSB has commenced approaching Pacific States to offer training to develop their accident investigation capability.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 8 December 2023, A Lulutai Airlines SAAB 340B lost directional control; and braking while taxiing to the domestic terminal, resulting in a taxiway excursion, collision with a disused concrete refuelling bund wall, and right undercarriage leg collapse. To assist with the investigation, the Tonga Civil Aviation Office (TCAO) requested the assistance of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB), who appointed an Accredited Representative and team to assist with the investigation.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 At the time of the Lulutai Airlines accident, TCAO had limited capacity and capability for Annex 13 type investigations, mainly due to the size of the aviation sector in Tonga. However, the Tongan Civil Aviation Act had provisions for the appointment of a Chief Investigator for each Annex 13 investigation commenced. As a result, a Chief Investigator was appointed on 8 December 2023.

2.2 On 15 December 2023, after a request for assistance was received from TCAO, ATSB appointed an Accredited Representative and 2 advisors, to assist with the Chief Investigator in a capability building role. As a result of the successful interactions regarding the accident investigation capacity building between ATSB and TCAO, Tonga published its first Annex 13 investigation.

2.3 Although Tonga has no established independent AIA, the provisions in the regulations allowed for an independent investigation to be carried out to completion with minimal disruption and no interference from outside influences from the Regulator or Government.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The Meeting is invited to note that even without an independent AIA, or adequate staffing numbers to setup an independent AIA, well established provisions in a CAA's Regulations can result in independent accident investigation.

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