International Civil Aviation Organization
Asia and Pacific Office

Twenty-sixth Meeting of the Asia Pacific Regional Aviation Safety Team (APRAST/26)

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Agenda Item 5: Presentations – State / Industry / ICAO

ESTABLISHMENT AND INITIAL WORK OF THE SAFETY CULTURE TASK FORCE

(Presented by the Republic of Korea, Japan, Singapore, IATA, Boeing and the PA-RAST Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This paper reports on the establishment and initial work of the Safety Culture Task Force under the ORG Working Group. It presents a proposed phased approach for voluntary reporting systems and a draft advisory on positive safety culture and Just Culture for discussion. The paper seeks the Meeting's views and support for the proposed direction and initial priorities, invites wider participation, and proposes consideration of future publication of the advisory following further review and consultation. Action by the Meeting is at paragraph 3.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Following the focused discussion on positive safety culture, reporting culture and voluntary safety reporting systems at APRAST/25, the Organizational Working Group (ORG WG) established the Task Force on Positive Safety Culture and Voluntary Reporting Systems (Safety Culture Task Force, SCTF). Paragraph 6.2.11.1 of the APRAST/25 Final Report records its role in supporting regional safety culture efforts and coordinating with the State Safety Programme (SSP) custodians on ORG Roadmap actions SEI 3.1.1 and 3.2.1. SEI 3.1.1 supports States in assessing their SSP implementation, while SEI 3.2.1 supports States in establishing their SSPs based on identified areas of focus.

1.2 SEI 3.2.1 supports AP-RASP Target 3.2, which mirrors GASP Target 3.2. The GASP indicators for that target include the percentage of States having established a framework for the protection of safety data and safety information (GASP-I 3.2.03; PQs 9.033, 9.041), and the percentage of States having established a safety data collection and processing system (GASP-I 3.2.02; PQs 9.029, 9.037, 9.045) (Doc 10162). The SCTF's work therefore bears directly on outcomes already measured under the regional and global targets.

1.3 The SCTF held its first three meetings on 7 August, 11 September and 16 October 2026. Its objective, agreed through correspondence following the first meeting, is to support States/Administrations in advancing positive safety culture (Just Culture) and voluntary reporting systems through regional exchange of practical experience and the development of useful guidance and a phased approach aligned with SEIs 3.1.1 and 3.2.1.

1.4 The initial work has included preparing a work plan, sharing existing technical references and good practices, and discussing a phased approach and practical regional resources. A draft three-phase approach and a draft regional safety advisory (RSA) developed by SCTF members are provided in Attachments A and B respectively for comments and further development.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The proposed phased approach in Attachment A provides a longer-term direction for establishing and strengthening voluntary reporting systems and using the resulting safety information for learning and safety improvement. This approach contributes to the SCTF's broader objective of advancing positive safety culture across the region. It covers foundations such as awareness, understanding existing arrangements and sharing experience; development of legal and operational frameworks and capacity; and longer-term effectiveness and continuous improvement. The phases and timeframes in Attachment A are indicative and remain subject to further discussion and adaptation to different national and organizational circumstances.

2.2 Further development of the phased approach in Attachment A should clarify the responsibilities of States/Administrations, service providers, operational personnel and their representative bodies, and regional partners, and identify activities that the SCTF can practically support. National legal arrangements and the operation of reporting systems remain matters for the relevant authorities and organizations. The SCTF's proposed contribution is to facilitate exchange of experience, identify useful existing resources and develop practical supporting material. The activities attributed to other bodies in Attachment A remain proposals for discussion.

2.3 The following initial priorities are proposed for further development:

a) review existing guidance and good practices, including practical examples that help explain reporting, fair accountability and organizational learning;

b) identify relevant information from the State-level SSP and Safety Data Collection and Processing Systems (SDCPS) surveys, when available, and develop possible complementary survey questions for SCTF review; and

c) review the draft advisory and refine the phased approach to identify manageable activities, responsible contributors and expected outputs.

2.4 The draft regional safety advisory (RSA) in Attachment B, entitled Positive Safety Culture Through Just Culture: Promoting Clarity, Consistency and Learning, provides a starting point for a concise regional resource. It addresses the relationship between positive safety culture and Just Culture, understanding operational circumstances, fair and consistent accountability, and the use of safety information for learning. It includes proposed recommendations for States/Administrations, service providers, operational personnel and their representative bodies.

2.5 Further technical review and consultation on the draft advisory are proposed, including its terminology, treatment of accountability and protection, consistency with ICAO provisions and guidance, and applicability across different legal and operational contexts. Following sufficient review, consultation and revision, the Meeting is invited to consider its future publication as a Regional Safety Advisory (RSA), subject to the applicable regional review and approval arrangements.

2.6 Wider participation would help ensure that the phased approach and advisory reflect different implementation needs and practical experience across the region. Interested States/Administrations and organizations are invited to join the SCTF and contribute relevant expertise, examples, existing tools and comments. The SCTF proposes to refine the initial activities in light of this input and report progress through the ORG WG at subsequent APRAST Meetings.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The Meeting is invited to:

a) note the establishment and initial progress of the SCTF;

b) support in principle the proposed direction and initial priorities described in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.3;

c) provide comments on the proposed phased approach in Attachment A and the draft advisory in Attachment B;

d) consider future publication of the advisory as an RSA following sufficient technical review, consultation and revision, subject to the applicable regional review and approval arrangements; and

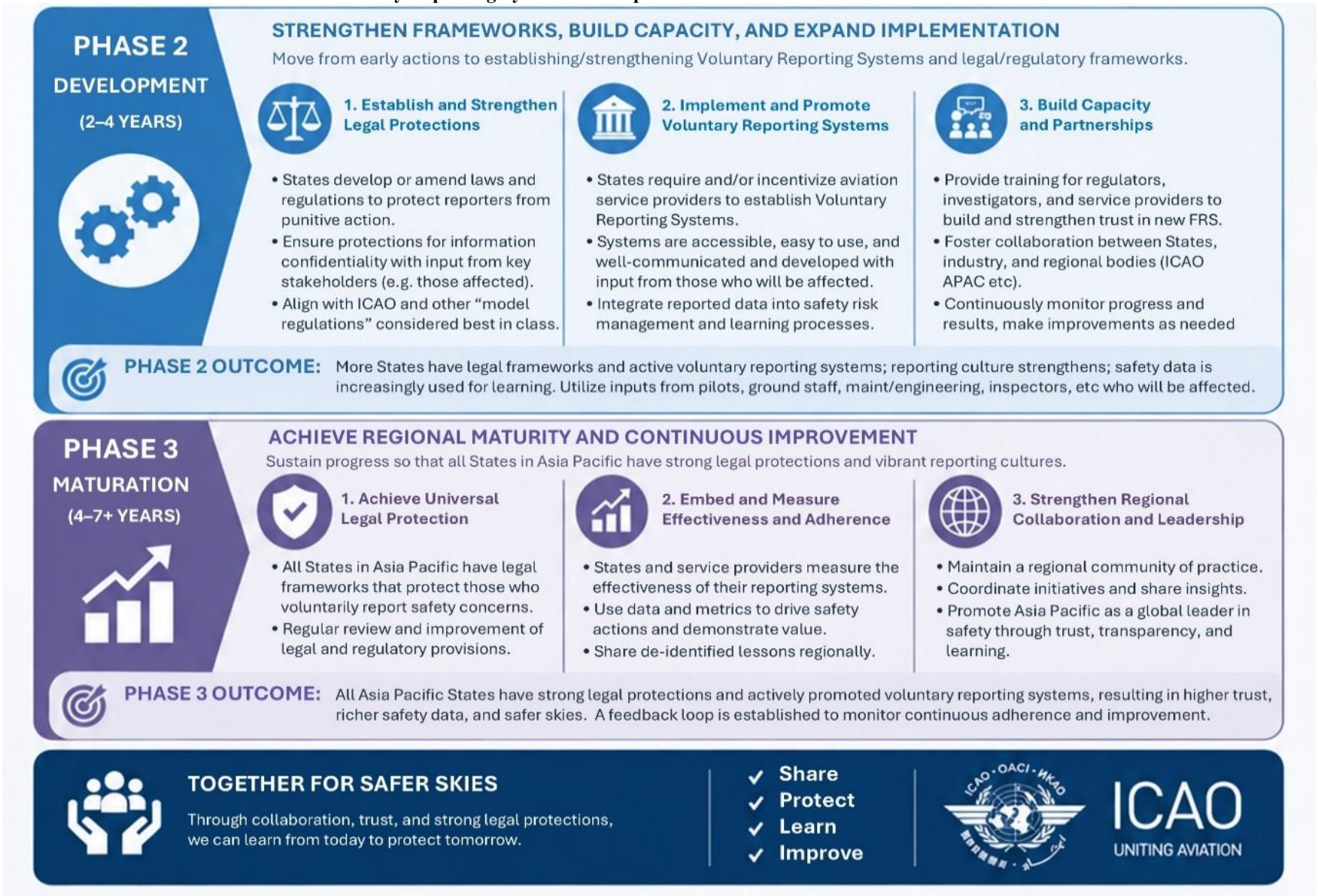
e) encourage interested States/Administrations and organizations to participate in the SCTF and contribute expertise, practical experience and relevant good practices.

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Attachment A
Voluntary Reporting Systems Development in Asia Pacific : A Three Phase Plan



Attachment A (continued)
Voluntary Reporting Systems Development in Asia Pacific : A Three Phase Plan



Attachment B

RASG-APAC Regional Safety Advisory (Draft)

Positive Safety Culture Through Just Culture: Promoting Clarity, Consistency and Learning

Subject

Promoting Positive Safety Culture through the implementation of Just Culture principles to improve clarity regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, promote the fair and consistent application of accountability, enhance organisational learning, and support the development of safety intelligence within State Safety Programmes (SSP) and Safety Management Systems (SMS).

This advisory is intended to support safety management decision-making and the development of Positive Safety Culture. It is not intended to replace, supersede or contradict applicable laws, regulations, judicial processes or organisational policies. States/Administrations, service providers, **operational personnel and their representative bodies** should apply these principles within their respective legal, regulatory and operational contexts.

Intended Audience

Civil Aviation Authorities (CAAs), Air Operators, Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs), Aerodrome Operators, Approved Maintenance Organisations (AMOs), Approved Training Organisations (ATOs), other aviation service providers, and operational personnel and their representative bodies.

Background

Positive Safety Culture supports effective SSP and SMS implementation through organisational learning, safety intelligence and proactive safety risk management.

Understanding operational reality is essential to effective safety management and continuous safety improvement.

Safety Challenge: Visibility and Understanding Operational Reality

Personnel throughout the aviation system routinely balance safety, operational continuity, workload, efficiency and resource constraints. As a result, operational adaptations and trade-offs occur every day across the aviation system.

While these trade-offs often support safe and successful outcomes, they may not always be visible to management and regulators.

Consequently, organisations may understand how work is expected to be performed while having less visibility of how work is actually performed under operational conditions.

When personnel are uncertain how actions, decisions or behaviours will be assessed, they may be less willing to share information about hazards, mistakes, operational challenges and the trade-offs they routinely manage.

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This may limit opportunities for learning, safety intelligence and safety improvement.

The absence of reports should not automatically be interpreted as the absence of risk. In some circumstances, it may indicate limited visibility of operational realities and emerging safety risks.

Mechanisms such as Fatigue Risk Management Systems (FRMS), Peer Support Programmes (PSP) and other safety reporting channels may also provide valuable insight into operational realities and emerging risks that may not otherwise be visible.

Positive Safety Culture and the Role of Just Culture

Positive Safety Culture is often described through the framework proposed by James Reason, which identifies five interdependent cultural attributes that support effective safety management:

- **Reporting Culture** – personnel willingly report hazards, occurrences and safety concerns;
- **Just Culture** – acceptable and unacceptable behaviours are clearly understood and applied fairly and consistently;
- **Learning Culture** – organisations learn from experience and implement improvements;
- **Informed Culture** – decisions are based on a sound understanding of safety risks, operational realities and emerging threats; and
- **Flexible Culture** – organisations adapt effectively to changing operational conditions and operational demands.

Together, these cultural attributes support effective safety management and contribute to a stronger Positive Safety Culture.

Within this framework, Just Culture plays an important role by helping to establish trust and a common understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This is consistent with the principles of ICAO Annex 19 and the Safety Management Manual (Doc 9859), which emphasise positive safety culture, safety reporting, organisational learning and effective safety management. Similar principles are also reflected in Regulation (EU) No 376/2014, which recognises Just Culture as an essential element of a broader safety culture while maintaining accountability for unacceptable behaviours.

Under Annex 19, safety data captured by, and safety information derived from, voluntary safety reporting systems are not to be used for disciplinary, civil, administrative or criminal proceedings against employees, operational personnel or organizations, unless a principle of exception applies. This protection extends to related sources, which include individuals and organizations (Annex 19, 5.4.1 and Note; Appendix 3, 2.1(a)).

Consistent with these principles, the protection of safety data, safety information and their sources supports continued reporting, organisational learning and safety improvement. Protection helps create the confidence necessary for personnel and organisations to share information about hazards, occurrences, operational challenges and operational realities. Without such protection, information essential to visibility, safety intelligence and continuous improvement may not be reported.

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Protection does not prevent preventive, corrective or remedial action necessary to maintain or improve safety. However, such actions should be applied fairly and communicated appropriately to minimise unintended impacts on trust, reporting and future information sharing.

When personnel trust the system and understand these boundaries, they are more willing to discuss hazards, mistakes, operational challenges and emerging risks.

This strengthens Reporting, Learning and Informed Cultures while improving visibility of operational realities and trade-offs routinely managed throughout the aviation system.

Improved visibility contributes to a stronger Flexible Culture by enabling States/Administrations, service providers, operational personnel and their representative bodies to adapt effectively to changing operational conditions and emerging risks.

The value of safety information extends beyond identifying hazards and occurrences. It enables States/Administrations, service providers, operational personnel and their representative bodies to better understand how work is actually performed across the aviation system, including the trade-offs and adaptations necessary to achieve safe and successful outcomes.

Behavioural Considerations

Most reported events involve human error or, at most, negligence rather than recklessness or wilful misconduct. These situations provide valuable opportunities for learning, continuous improvement and strengthening Positive Safety Culture.

Human Error

Human error involves unintended actions, omissions or decisions despite an individual's genuine intention to perform the task correctly.

Human error should generally be viewed as an opportunity for organisational learning. The objective is to improve the system and reduce recurrence.

Negligence

Negligence involves actions or decisions where the level of care, competence or professional judgement exercised falls below that reasonably expected for the task being performed.

While negligence may require appropriate corrective measures at the individual level, it should also be examined as an opportunity for organisational learning.

The objective is to address the individual's actions while identifying improvements that strengthen system performance and reduce recurrence.

Recklessness or Wilful Misconduct

Recklessness or wilful misconduct involves conduct where an individual knowingly disregards a significant safety risk or knowingly departs from established safety requirements.

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Such behaviour differs from human error and negligence because the individual is aware of the risk associated with the action or decision.

Recklessness or wilful misconduct is generally inconsistent with both Just Culture and Positive Safety Culture and falls outside the behaviours normally protected under Just Culture principles.

Accountability Considerations

Positive Safety Culture requires accountability at both the individual and organisational level.

Individuals are accountable for the decisions and actions within their control. Organisations are accountable for managing risks, implementing safety improvements and providing the conditions necessary for safe operations.

The application of accountability should be fair, proportionate and based on the circumstances of the event. Consideration may include:

- The nature and severity of the behaviour;
- The information, circumstances and operational conditions existing at the time;
- Operational, organisational and human-performance factors that may have influenced the behaviour;
- Whether the risk and potential consequences should reasonably have been recognised at the time;
- Whether similar behaviour is likely to recur;
- The individual's overall performance history and previous safety-related conduct;
- Whether comparable events or behaviours have occurred previously; and
- The consistency of the response with similar cases.

Accountability should be applied within applicable legal, regulatory and organisational frameworks.

When determining an appropriate response, organisations should also consider the potential impact of that response on Positive Safety Culture, including its effect on trust, reporting, organisational learning and the willingness of personnel to share safety information. The objective is not to avoid accountability, but to ensure that accountability supports safety improvement and does not unintentionally discourage the sharing of safety information.

Where human-performance factors are relevant, consideration should be given to influences such as fatigue, stress, personal circumstances and other factors that may affect performance.

In such situations, support mechanisms such as Fatigue Risk Management Systems (FRMS) and Peer Support Programmes (PSP) may contribute to both individual wellbeing and safety improvement. Consideration should also be given to whether an event highlights opportunities to strengthen these programmes, associated processes, or other elements of the organisation's SMS.

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Recommendations

To States/Administrations

- Promote Positive Safety Culture as a core element of SSP implementation and State safety promotion activities;
- Provide clear guidance regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, including the treatment of human error, negligence, recklessness and wilful misconduct;
- Foster reporting environments that support trust, learning and the sharing of safety information;
- Consider operational context and operational trade-offs during oversight, assessments and investigations;
- Consider whether accountability responses and enforcement actions support the broader objective of safety improvement, taking into account organisational, operational and systemic factors rather than focusing solely on an isolated event;
- Encourage the implementation and continuous improvement of Fatigue Risk Management Systems (FRMS), Peer Support Programmes (PSP), and other mechanisms that support individual wellbeing and performance;
- Establish or review national laws, regulations and policies relating to the protection of safety data, safety information and related sources, consistent with Annex 19 principles;
- Use SSP activities and safety intelligence to identify systemic issues and operational challenges across the aviation system; and
- Share lessons learned and good practices through national, regional and international safety forums.

To Service Providers, operational personnel and their representative bodies

- Foster Positive Safety Culture through trust, openness, learning and shared responsibility for safety;
- Communicate Just Culture principles and accountability expectations;
- Encourage reporting of hazards, operational challenges and emerging risks;
- Communicate to personnel how safety reports, and those who submit them, are protected;
- Seek to understand not only what happened, but also why actions and decisions appeared reasonable at the time;
- Consider organisational, operational and human-performance influences when assessing events;

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- Consider whether accountability responses support the broader objective of safety improvement, taking into account organisational, operational and systemic factors rather than focusing solely on an isolated event;
- Review whether events involving fatigue, wellbeing or other human-performance factors highlight opportunities to strengthen FRMS, PSP or other supporting elements of the SMS;
- Consult relevant staff representative bodies, where appropriate, when developing or reviewing safety policies relating to acceptable and unacceptable behaviours; and
- Use lessons learned to strengthen organisational learning and SMS activities.

Safety Message

Positive Safety Culture supports effective SSP and SMS implementation.

A key enabler of Positive Safety Culture is a common understanding of how accountability should be applied.

Just Culture is not merely about encouraging reporting. It promotes clarity and the fair and consistent application of accountability while supporting organisational learning and safety intelligence.

By promoting clarity in accountability, States/Administrations, service providers, **operational personnel and their representative bodies** can strengthen trust, improve learning, better understand operational realities and operational trade-offs, and support a stronger Positive Safety Culture.



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Positive Safety Culture is strengthened when people understand how accountability will be applied and are willing to share the operational realities and trade-offs necessary for learning and safety improvement.

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