



ICAO

International Civil Aviation Organization

Eleventh Meeting of the ICAO Asia/Pacific Search and Rescue Workgroup (APSAR/WG/11)

Bangkok, Thailand, 5 – 8 May 2026

Agenda Item 2: Review Outcomes of Related Meetings

OUTCOMES OF THE ICAO/IMO JOINT WORKING GROUP ON SAR MEETING

(Presented by United States)

SUMMARY

This paper presents a brief overview of representative outcomes of the thirty-second meeting of the ICAO/IMO Joint Working Group on SAR held from 3 to 7 November 2025.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The thirty-second meeting of the ICAO/International Maritime Organization (IMO) Joint Working Group on Harmonization of Aeronautical and Maritime SAR (JWG 32) was held in person in Sydney, Australia from 3 to 7 November 2025. This session was chaired by Mr. Tai Kit of Singapore.

1.2 The Asia/Pacific Search and Rescue (SAR) Workgroup is well represented by JWG members from Australia, China, New Zealand, Singapore and the United States and many States from Asia/Pacific provided observers who actively participate in the JWG meetings.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The ICAO/IMO JWG is a group of eight aeronautical SAR experts and eight maritime SAR experts who meet annually supported by the IMO and ICAO who each provide a secretariat. Strong effort is made to meet in States around the world to enable local inputs from nearby States and organizations. The Asia/Pacific region is represented by two aeronautical SAR experts, one each from Australia and Singapore; and, three maritime experts, one each from China, New Zealand and the United States.

2.2 JWG 32 discussions and decisions included:

- a) reports on outcomes of ICAO and IMO from the viewpoint of their headquarters;
- b) proposed amendments to the IAMSAR Manual, such as psychology of emergency and search planning and evaluation concepts;
- c) development of a strategic outlook for the global SAR operating environment; and
- d) assisting States in implementing improvements in SAR service. quality, capacity and capability and use of ICAO and IMO technical cooperation activities.

2.3 The IAMSAR Manual has a three-year cycle to consider amendments to its next edition. JWG 32 convened in the second year of that cycle and focused on introducing ideas and initial draft text for further discussion and refinement into final proposed amendments at JWG 32 and finalized no later than JWG 33 in November 2026. Discussions also included developing provisions regarding new search and rescue techniques and procedures, as well as ways to advance search and rescue around the world.

2.4 Outcomes from JWG 32 included:

- a) search planning and evaluation concepts: agreed to specific amendments to IAMSAR Manual Volume II, appendices associated with Chapter 4 *Search planning and evaluation concepts*. The ad hoc correspondence group under the coordination of New Zealand was continued and its scope of work was expanded to include other ways to improve the use of and content within IAMSAR Manual Volume II;
- b) remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) and other autonomous craft: the ICAO Council is developing an interim framework to address the extensive legal concerns associated with use of this technology and the basis on which compliant operations may be conducted. The JWG will continue active discussions to enable effective use of this capability for SAR and provision of guidance within the IAMSAR Manual;
- c) autonomous distress tracking (ADT): the ADT system is operational, but many States are still smoothing out the working relationships between the SAR services and the air traffic services. Focus is now being brought onto resolving the non-distress activations of the ADT device. Mitigating non-distress activations of the ELT(DT) will require coordinated efforts from civil aviation authorities, airline operators, aircraft manufacturers and maintenance facilities;
- d) general SAR overview: Australia led an initiative to establish and maintain a strategic outlook on new and emerging issues that might impact the global aeronautical and maritime SAR system environment. As a result, the JWG website on the secure portal will host “General SAR Overview” for posting of relevant matters;
- e) aeronautical SAR oversight: results of ICAO’s Universal Safety Oversight Audit Program (USOAP) Continuous Monitoring Approach (CMA) indicate SAR continues to represent a major challenge for States when performing their safety oversight function. To help resolve the many challenges, Australia will coordinate an ad hoc correspondence group to consider proposals for possible aeronautical SAR service oversight systems; and
- f) JWG 33 will convene from 9 to 13 November 2026 in Malmo, Sweden. Its invitation letter should be sent out in late June 2026 and available on the IMO website as a circular letter or upon request. ICAO HQ publishes an invitation as a memorandum which can be provided upon request. APAC Administrations can also request a JWG representative to forward the invitation.

2.5 The Pacific Search and Rescue Workshop (PACSAR) met from 10 to 14 November 2025 in Fiji. The PACSAR Workshop meets once every two years with a focus on Pacific Island countries and territories. Its program has led to sustained improvement in SAR services across Oceania. IMO provided key assistance in organizing the event as well as funding the participation of several island States. ICAO/IMO JWG members also participated in the PACSAR Workshop. The next PACSAR Workshop is scheduled for 2027 to be hosted by French Polynesia.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in this paper;
- b) encourage States to participate in ICAO/IMO JWG meetings and future PACSAR Workshops; and
- c) discuss relevant matters as appropriate note the information contained in this paper.

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