



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 4: Asia/Pacific and Inter-regional SAR Planning, Coordination and Cooperation

AERONAUTICAL SEARCH AND RESCUE MECHANISM IN SRI LANKA

(Presented by Sri Lanka)

SUMMARY

This paper presents the progress made by Sri Lanka in strengthening its national aeronautical Search and Rescue (SAR) framework through the implementation of the National Aeronautical Search and Rescue Plan (NASARP) and the establishment of the National Aeronautical Search and Rescue Committee (NASC). It highlights key initiatives undertaken, including the conduct of a national SAR workshop and the inaugural large-scale Tabletop Exercise (TTX SAREX), aimed at enhancing inter-agency coordination and operational readiness within Sri Lanka's Search and Rescue Region (SRR). The paper also outlines ongoing efforts to improve coordination mechanisms, stakeholder engagement, and regional cooperation in SAR operations.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The provision of effective aeronautical Search and Rescue (SAR) services is a critical obligation of Contracting States under the framework of the International Civil Aviation Organization. In this regard, Sri Lanka has undertaken significant steps to enhance its national SAR capabilities in line with international Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs).

1.2 To strengthen the coordination and effectiveness of SAR operations, Sri Lanka has established the National Aeronautical Search and Rescue Plan (NASARP) as the primary policy and operational framework, supported by the formation of the National Aeronautical Search and Rescue Committee (NASC) to provide strategic direction and oversight.

1.3 This paper outlines the progress achieved in the implementation of NASARP, the establishment and functioning of NASC, and the conduct of national-level SAR capacity-building initiatives, including the SAR workshop and Tabletop Exercise (TTX SAREX), which collectively contribute to enhancing the State's SAR preparedness and response capability.

2. DISCUSSION

National Aeronautical Search and Rescue Plan (NASARP)

2.1 Sri Lanka has established the National Aeronautical Search and Rescue Plan (NASARP) as the primary framework to ensure an effective and coordinated response capability for aircraft-related emergencies within its Search and Rescue Region (SRR). The NASARP serves as the key mechanism through which the Civil Aviation Authority of Sri Lanka (CAASL) implements national aeronautical SAR policy and provides a baseline reference for all SAR stakeholder organizations.

2.2 The NASARP outlines agreed coordination procedures for the conduct of SAR operations and aims to establish a robust and integrated SAR system supported by appropriately staffed and trained organizations operating to defined standards of competence, safety, and efficiency.

2.3 The NASARP was formally promulgated as Rules No. 1 of 2023 under the Civil Aviation Act No. 14 of 2010 and published in Gazette Extraordinary No. 2347/02 dated 28 August 2023. The Plan mandates the provision of 24-hour SAR services by CAASL.

National Aeronautical Search and Rescue Committee (NASC)

2.4 The National Aeronautical Search and Rescue Committee (NASC) functions as the executive body responsible for providing strategic direction on aeronautical SAR matters in Sri Lanka. It oversees the development, implementation, and continuous improvement of the NASARP.

2.5 The NASC comprises senior representatives from key Ministries, authorities, and stakeholder organizations responsible for regulation, coordination, response, and investigation related to SAR activities:

- a) Secretary to the Ministry of Ports & Aviation (co-chair)
- b) Secretary to the Ministry of Defence (co-chair)
- c) Secretary to the Ministry of Finance, Economic Stabilization and National Policies;
- d) Secretary to the Ministry of Fisheries;
- e) Secretary to the Ministry of Health;
- f) Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign affairs;
- g) Director General of Civil Aviation Sri Lanka (Secretary)
- h) Chairman of Airport & Aviation Services (Sri Lanka) (Pvt) Ltd; and
- i) Director General of the Disaster Management Centre.

2.6 The first meeting of the NASC (NASCM/01) was held on 21 May 2025, during which several key initiatives were discussed, including:

- a) the review and enhancement of existing SAR plans to improve efficiency and coordination;
- b) the conduct of a national SAR workshop and joint SAR exercise (SAREX); and
- c) the establishment of bilateral arrangements with neighboring States to strengthen regional SAR cooperation.

SAR Workshop and Tabletop Exercise (TTX SAREX)

2.7 A national SAR workshop was conducted on 3 November 2025 at CAASL, followed by the inaugural large-scale Tabletop Exercise (TTX) on 6 November 2025.

2.8 The exercise involved over 20 stakeholder organizations under the NASARP framework, with participation from approximately 70 representatives, including the armed forces, police, and other relevant agencies. The activity was conducted under the leadership of the Director General of Civil Aviation.

2.9 The TTX was designed to evaluate and enhance inter-agency coordination and operational readiness within Sri Lanka's SRR. The exercise scenarios included both land-based SAR incidents and high seas SAR operations, enabling a comprehensive assessment of stakeholder roles and responsibilities across different operational domains.

2.10 The exercise facilitated the evaluation of coordination mechanisms, communication procedures, and response capabilities under simulated emergency conditions, contributing to the identification of areas for further improvement within the national SAR system.

Conclusion

2.11 Sri Lanka has made significant progress in strengthening its NASARP framework through the implementation of the national aeronautical search and rescue plan, supported by the establishment of the National Aeronautical Search and Rescue Committee (NASARC).

2.12 The conduct of the SAR workshop and the inaugural TTX demonstrated the State's commitment to enhancing inter-agency coordination, operational readiness, and overall effectiveness of SAR services within its SRR.

2.13 These initiatives have contributed to improved coordination mechanisms, better understanding of stakeholder roles and responsibilities, and the identification of areas requiring further enhancement, including regional cooperation and continuous capacity building.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to note the information contained in this paper.

— END —