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DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION**

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AGENDA ITEM 3: AVIATION SAFETY

**STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION FOR THE
CERTIFICATION AND OVERSIGHT OF HOT AIR BALLOON
OPERATIONS**

Presented by Malaysia, Co-sponsored by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency
(EASA)

SUMMARY

As hot air balloon operations expand across the Asia and Pacific (APAC) region for tourism, recreation and aerial work, States face regulatory and operational challenges distinct from commercial air transport. APAC Member States are at different stages of regulatory maturity. This paper highlights regional workshops and cooperation among multidisciplinary teams of regional experts and partners that aim to harmonise and strengthen hot air balloon oversight across the APAC region.

STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION FOR THE CERTIFICATION AND OVERSIGHT OF HOT AIR BALLOON OPERATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Hot air balloon operations have experienced gradual growth across the Asia and Pacific (APAC) region, particularly in support of tourism, recreation and aerial work activities. While the scale of operations differs among Member States, these activities present common regulatory and operational challenges relating to certification, operational oversight, personnel licensing, airworthiness, safety management and integration into controlled airspace.

1.2 Unlike commercial air transport, hot air balloon operations require a regulatory framework that is proportionate to the level of operational complexity while maintaining an acceptable level of safety. Many Civil Aviation Authorities (CAAs) within APAC are therefore at different stages of developing or implementing regulations, approval processes, and inspector competencies for balloon operations.

1.3 Recognising these common challenges, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), through the EU-ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Package (SCOPE) Aviation Partnership Project, established a regional platform to facilitate collaboration among ASEAN Civil Aviation Authorities. The initiative aims to promote technical cooperation, exchange of experience, and sharing of best practices to support the development of effective regulatory oversight for hot air balloon operations.

1.4 As part of this initiative, regional workshops have been successfully conducted in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2025 and in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 9 to 11 June 2026. These workshops brought together regulators, technical experts, and industry representatives to discuss practical approaches towards certification, surveillance, and operational oversight of hot air balloon operations.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The EASA SCOPE Aviation Partnership Project has provided ASEAN Member States with a unique opportunity to collaborate on an aviation activity that remains relatively specialised but presents many common regulatory challenges across the region.

2.2 Rather than each authority independently developing regulatory frameworks, the workshops enabled Member States to collectively discuss regulatory approaches, identify common challenges and exchange practical oversight experiences. The collaboration also allows authorities with more mature regulatory systems to share lessons learnt with those that are still developing their national framework.

2.3 The workshops have encouraged open discussions among operational inspectors, airworthiness inspectors, personnel licensing specialists, and air navigation services representatives. This multidisciplinary approach recognises that safe hot air balloon operations extend beyond operational approval alone and require coordinated oversight across multiple technical disciplines.

2.4 Participation from EASA experts further enabled ASEAN Member States to better understand the European regulatory framework, including the principles behind their provisions for balloon operations, flight crew licensing, authority requirements, continuing airworthiness and related implementing rules. Rather than promoting direct adoption, these discussions provided useful references that Member States may consider when developing regulations suited to their own national operating environments.

3. KEY OUTCOMES OF THE REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

3.1 The regional workshops demonstrated that many ASEAN Member States face similar challenges despite differing levels of balloon activity. Common areas identified include:

- a) development of appropriate regulatory frameworks;
- b) approval, authorisation and oversight of balloon operations;
- c) pilot licensing and examiner systems;
- d) approval and oversight of training organisations;
- e) inspector competency development;
- f) continuing airworthiness oversight;
- g) occurrence reporting and safety data collection; and
- h) coordination with ATM/ANS for balloon operations.

3.2 The workshops also enabled participating authorities to share practical experiences, case studies and operational scenarios, allowing regulators to better understand emerging safety risks and effective oversight practices.

3.3 Industry participation provided valuable operational perspectives, enabling regulators to better appreciate practical implementation challenges while maintaining appropriate levels of safety oversight.

3.4 The technical exchanges further strengthened professional networks among ASEAN inspectors, creating valuable channels for future consultation and information sharing beyond the workshops themselves.

4. BENEFITS OF CONTINUED REGIONAL COLLABORATION

4.1 Greater Consistency and Convergence of Regulatory Approaches

Continued collaboration promotes greater consistency in regulatory interpretation and oversight practices while allowing sufficient flexibility for Member States to accommodate their individual legislative and operational environments.

4.2 Capacity Building

Regular technical workshops provide opportunities to continuously develop inspector competencies through practical case studies, technical presentations, and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing.

4.3 Sharing of Best Practices

Regional collaboration enables authorities to benefit from each other's experiences, reducing duplication of effort in developing guidance material, inspection methodologies, and oversight procedures.

4.4 Enhanced Safety Oversight

The exchange of operational experiences and safety information allows Member States to better identify common risks, emerging trends, and effective mitigation strategies,

thereby strengthening overall safety oversight across the region.

4.5 **Strengthened Regional Network**

The workshops have established an active network of technical specialists who can continue to support one another through ongoing dialogue, exchange of information, and future collaborative activities.

5. **THE WAY FORWARD**

5.1 Building upon the successful workshops held in Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, ASEAN Member States recognised the value of maintaining regional collaboration through an appropriate regional mechanism.

5.2 Future collaboration could include:

- a) periodic regional technical workshops;
- b) exchange of inspectors and technical experts;
- c) development of common guidance materials;
- d) sharing of oversight tools and inspection checklists;
- e) exchange of safety data and operational experience;
- f) collaborative development of inspector training resources; and
- g) continued dialogue on emerging operational and regulatory issues.

5.3 Such collaboration will continue to support the development of proportionate, practical and effective regulatory oversight while respecting the differing operational environments and regulatory frameworks of individual Member States.

6. **CONCLUSION**

6.1 The regional workshops conducted under the EASA SCOPE Aviation Partnership Project have demonstrated the significant value of collaboration among ASEAN Civil Aviation Authorities in addressing the certification and oversight of hot air balloon operations.

6.2 Through the sharing of technical knowledge, operational experience and regulatory best practices, participating authorities have strengthened regional capacity and developed stronger professional networks that support aviation safety.

6.3 CAAM believes that continued regional collaboration through appropriate mechanisms will further enhance harmonisation, strengthen inspector competency, promote the exchange of best practices and contribute towards the safe and sustainable development of hot air balloon operations throughout the APAC region.

7. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

7.1 The Conference is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in this Paper.
- b) recognise the value of regional cooperation and capacity building in supporting the safe certification and oversight of hot air balloon operations;
- c) agree to encourage wider participation by interested Asia and Pacific States in future workshops conducted under the COSCAP-SEA or ICAO APAC Regional Office framework; and
- d) encourage States and relevant partners, where appropriate, to provide updates on progress, lessons learned and good practices at a future DGCA Conference or another appropriate regional forum.

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