

**61ST CONFERENCE OF
DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION**

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AGENDA ITEM 3: AVIATION SAFETY

**STEPS TAKEN BY DGCA FOR PROMOTING POSITIVE SAFETY
CULTURE IN INDIA**

(Presented by India)

INFORMATION PAPER

SUMMARY

Positive safety culture has emerged as a fundamental element of safety management in aviation. India has taken various initiatives to promote positive safety culture, which includes establishment of Voluntary Safety Reporting system and the systematic use of information derived from the VSRS database to proactively manage safety risks. Furthermore, India's Safety Policy, under the State Safety Programme, reflects senior authority commitment to fostering a positive safety culture across the aviation industry, recognizing the critical importance and value of an effective aviation safety management system. The paper also discusses the increasing participation in the Voluntary Safety Reporting programme, reflecting growing confidence in India's non-punitive safety reporting framework.

STEPS TAKEN BY DGCA FOR PROMOTING POSITIVE SAFETY CULTURE IN INDIA

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Positive safety culture has emerged as a fundamental element of safety management in aviation. ICAO Annex 19 establishes the framework for the implementation of State Safety Programmes (SSP) and Safety Management Systems (SMS), recognizing that effective safety management extends beyond regulatory compliance and requires the active participation of State and its service providers, and aviation personnel in fostering a positive safety culture that supports safe operations.

1.2 Further, para 5.3.5 of ICAO Annex 19 requires States to take necessary measures, including the promotion of a positive safety culture, to encourage safety reporting through mandatory and voluntary safety reporting system.

1.3 The Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP) 2026-2028 identifies the promotion of positive safety culture as one of the *values* to achieve its *vision* “Zero fatalities in commercial operations by 2030 and beyond”.

1.4 India has aligned its safety management framework with the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) contained in ICAO Annex 19. Through the development of the State Safety Programme (SSP), National Aviation Safety Plan (NASP), Civil Aviation Requirements (CARs), mandatory and voluntary safety reporting systems, safety promotion programmes, and safety oversight activities to strengthen safety performance and foster a positive safety culture across the civil aviation sector.

1.5 India Safety Policy under State Safety Programme reflects a commitment from senior authorities to promote positive safety culture across aviation industry that recognizes the importance and value of effective aviation safety management system.

1.6 Section 3 of “The Bharatiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam, 2024” empowers the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to carry out safety oversight and regulatory functions in respect of matter specified in the Act or the Rules made thereunder. India through primary aviation legislation, Rule 29F of the Aircraft Rules, 1937, established voluntary safety reporting system which is non-punitive and afford protection to safety data captured by, and safety information derived from, voluntary safety reporting system and related sources.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Positive Safety Culture – An Essential Enabler of Aviation Safety

2.1.1 The aviation industry has initially relied on regulatory compliance, technological advancements, and operational standards to achieve safety. However, experience from accident/incident investigations has revealed that organizational and human factors continue to influence safety outcomes. Recognizing this, ICAO has adopted a proactive and performance-based approach to manage safety in which organizational culture plays a crucial role for continuous improvement of safety performance.

2.1.2 Positive safety culture is a shared organizational value supported by visible leadership commitment, mutual trust, open communication, accountability, and continuous learning. Such a culture encourages personnel at all levels to identify hazards, report safety concerns without fear, and actively participate in safety risk management.

2.2 Positive Safety Culture in India

2.2.1 Since 2010, India has progressively aligned its safety management framework with the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) contained in ICAO Annex 19 through development and

management of State Safety Programme (SSP) and the implementation of Safety Management System (SMS) among applicable service providers.

2.2.2 Recognizing that effective safety management depends on open reporting and organizational learning, DGCA encourages inculcation of positive safety culture within its setup and among the service providers through effective mandatory safety reporting system, voluntary safety reporting system and enforcement policy.

2.2.3 The DGCA India has established a comprehensive mandatory safety reporting system, firmly supported by primary aviation legislation. This system is both robust and highly effective, ensuring that all reportable occurrences are captured in accordance with regulatory requirements.

2.2.4 In addition, it is essential to gather information on actual or potential safety deficiencies that may not be addressed through the mandatory reporting framework. To identify latent conditions such as inadequate safety procedures, human errors, and other underlying risks, DGCA India has established a voluntary safety reporting system.

2.2.3 The Voluntary Safety Reporting System established under Rule 29 (F), is non-punitive and confidential, ensuring protection for both the safety data collected and the information derived from voluntary reports and related sources. By enabling confidential reporting and prioritizing learning over blame, the system reinforces the principles of a strong reporting culture and fosters the positive safety culture promoted by ICAO.

2.2.4 There are three modes of submission of voluntary safety reports to DGCA as described below:

- (i) Mode 1- through web portal
- (ii) Mode 2- by email
- (iii) Mode 3- by Post

2.2.4.1 To maintain the confidentiality and prevent the use of data collected under VSRS for purposes other than safety, total electronic process has been put in place

2.2.4.2 After receipt of the voluntary safety report, name & address of the reporter and all identifying information are kept confidential and does not become part of the electronic database.

2.2.4.3 After de-identifying the report, the information is analyzed by a select group of officers for deciding follow up action on the report. All correspondence, contact details are deleted from DGCA system. Paper copies of reports and correspondence are destroyed.

2.2.4.4 Anonymous reports are accepted, however the reporter may give his/her identity to enable contact if any part of the report needs clarification.

2.2.5 The lessons learned and corrective actions arising from voluntary safety reports are shared with both the reporter and the wider aviation community. Specific issues or emerging trends are brought to the attention of the relevant authorities to enable the implementation of necessary preventive measures and appropriate follow-up.

2.2.6 The voluntary reports have been received in the areas of Flight Operations, Approved Training Organisation, Air Traffic management, Aircraft Maintenance, Aerodrome operations etc. Since the implementation of the web-based Voluntary Safety Reporting (VSR) system through AIC 16/2021, DGCA has observed a significant improvement in safety reporting. Between 2022 and 2025, the number of voluntary safety reports increased by approximately 35%, indicating greater participation by aviation personnel in reporting hazards and safety concerns. The increase in reporting reflects growing confidence in the non-punitive confidential reporting system fostering a positive reporting culture.

2.3 Opportunities for Further Strengthening Positive Safety Culture

2.3.1 While India has established a comprehensive regulatory framework aligned with ICAO standards, the rapid growth of the aviation sector introduces new challenges related to organizational

complexity, technological progress, and rising operational demands. Sustaining a positive safety culture therefore requires ongoing commitment from both the regulator and service providers.

2.3.2 Future initiatives may include safety culture assessments, stronger confidential and voluntary reporting systems, enhanced leadership programs, improved feedback mechanisms, and broader sharing of safety lessons. These efforts will build trust, promote organizational learning, and strengthen proactive safety risk management in line with ICAO guidance.

3. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

3.1 The Conference is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in this Paper;
- b) encourage APAC States to strengthen a positive safety culture in accordance with SARPs contained in ICAO Annex 19. S; and
- c) promote sharing of best practices and voluntary reporting experiences among Member States to drive continuous improvement in aviation safety across the region.

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