

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

*Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
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AGENDA ITEM 4: AIR NAVIGATION

**ENHANCING REGIONAL PREPAREDNESS FOR HIGHER
AIRSPACE OPERATIONS**

(Presented by India)

SUMMARY

Higher Airspace Operations (HAO) are emerging as an important consideration for international civil aviation. Following the Fourteenth Air Navigation Conference (AN-Conf/14), ICAO has initiated work towards a global framework. As it continues to evolve, timely regional engagement will enable Asia and Pacific (APAC) States not only to prepare for future implementation but also to contribute collectively to the formulation of internationally harmonized policies and guidance. This paper discusses the strategic implications of HAO for the Region and proposes actions to enhance regional preparedness.

ENHANCING REGIONAL PREPAREDNESS FOR HIGHER AIRSPACE OPERATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Civil aviation is entering a period in which activities above the altitudes traditionally associated with most air traffic services are expected to increase in scale and diversity. These activities include advanced aerospace vehicles, reusable launch systems, high-altitude platforms, and other emerging higher airspace operations. ICAO Assembly and AN-Conf/14 have recognized growing importance of Higher Airspace Operations (HAO) for international civil aviation and initiated work towards a global framework.

1.2 While standards and regulatory provisions are still evolving, the pace of technological and commercial development has prompted increasing attention from regulators, air navigation service providers, and international organizations. The issue therefore warrants consideration not only from a technical perspective but also from a policy, governance, and regional coordination perspective.

2. DISCUSSION

Global Framework

2.1 Activities in the higher airspace domain have continued to expand. Commercial launch operations have increased, reusable launch technologies are maturing, and several States are exploring frameworks for integrating evolving aerospace activities with existing aviation systems.

2.2 Following the outcomes of *AN-Conf/14 Recommendation 3.1/7 – Higher airspace operations*, ICAO has initiated work towards the development of globally harmonized concepts and guidance for HAO, reflecting growing international recognition of their implications for civil aviation.

Implications for APAC

2.3 As higher airspace activities evolve, States may face policy questions relating to regulatory frameworks, interoperability, cross-border coordination, institutional responsibilities, information sharing, and future integration with existing air navigation systems.

2.4 The issue also highlights the increasing interaction between various aviation activities, requiring closer coordination among civil aviation authorities, air navigation service providers, and other national stakeholders.

2.5 The APAC region encompasses States with diverse levels of operational activity, regulatory maturity, and institutional capability. As higher airspace activities expand, different national approaches may emerge, potentially creating challenges for harmonization and future interoperability.

2.6 Early regional dialogue could help States exchange experience, identify common concerns, and develop a shared understanding of key issues before large-scale operations become widespread.

Opportunities for Regional Cooperation

2.7 The region may benefit from an approach focused on awareness, cooperation, and knowledge sharing. Potential areas of cooperation include monitoring international developments, exchanging national experience, building regulatory capability, and contributing coordinated regional perspectives to ICAO discussions.

2.8 Enhanced regional cooperation may also assist APAC States in developing coordinated inputs to ICAO, strengthening institutional capability and promoting greater consistency in future implementation of internationally agreed provisions.

2.9 Such cooperation would not predetermine future regulatory models but could help ensure that the APAC region remains informed, prepared, and able to participate effectively in the evolution of harmonized standards for HAO.

3. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

3.1 The Conference is invited to:

- a) recognize HAO as a strategic matter requiring regional coordinated policy, regulatory, institutional and operational preparedness in the APAC region;
- b) encourage States to review their national readiness for HAO, including the respective roles and coordination arrangements of civil aviation authorities, air navigation service providers, space authorities, military authorities and other relevant stakeholders; and
- c) encourage coordinated regional engagement with ICAO's ongoing work on HAO to ensure that APAC perspectives are appropriately reflected in future ICAO provisions.

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