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The Fifth Meeting of the South Asia, Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia ATM Coordination Group (SAIOSEACG/5)

Bangkok, Thailand, 13 - 16 January 2026

Agenda Item 3: Review of Current Operations and Problem Areas

PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF 20 NM LONGITUDINAL SPACING ON AIR ROUTES L642 AND M771

(Presented by Hong Kong China)

SUMMARY

This paper presents a progress update on the implementation of 20NM longitudinal spacing on air routes L642 and M771.

Following the successful trial implementation of the reduced spacing, the SCSTFRG/13 meeting adopted Decision SCSTFRG/13-1, which endorsed the full implementation of 20NM longitudinal spacing on L642 and M771. However, the application of the reduced spacing was frequently suspended due to the activation of Large Scale Weather Deviation Contingency Procedure (LSWDCP), which degraded the effectiveness of this initiative. It is recommended that concerned States and Administrations consider the adoption of 30NM longitudinal spacing on L642/M771 during periods when the LSWDCP is in effect.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Hong Kong, China is committed to optimising the capacity of air routes within the Hong Kong Flight Information Region (FIR) and the APAC Region, including the major trunk routes L642 and M771. Enhancement of longitudinal spacing on air routes L642 and M771 had been agreed and was listed as one of the priority action items for the region. During the SAIOSEACG/2 and SCSTFRG/11 meetings held in 2023, all concerned States/Administrations and IATA expressed full support for implementing 20NM longitudinal spacing on L642 and M771. Subsequently, at the SAIOSEACG/3 meeting held in April 2024, a trial operation proposed by Hong Kong, China was agreed upon and the trial commenced on 7 May 2024. Positive feedback had been received from involved States/Administrations and airline operators regarding the resulting increase in route capacity, greater availability of optimal cruising levels and reduced ground delays. At the SCSTFRG/13 meeting in July 2025, Decision SCSTFRG/13-1 was adopted, endorsing the full implementation of 20NM longitudinal spacing on L642 and M771, while noting that further coordination is required to finalise the Letters of Agreement (LOAs).

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 20NM minimum longitudinal spacing is applicable on L642 and M771 daily, subject to the following conditions:

- a) aircraft cruising at or above FL290;
- b) aircraft equipped with serviceable ADS-B; and
- c) longitudinal spacing between two aircraft is constant or increasing.

2.2 Aircraft without serviceable ADS-B operating on routes L642 and M771 shall cruise at FL280 or below unless prior approval has been obtained from the relevant receiving ACC.

2.3 A new LOA between Sanya ACC and Hong Kong ATCC has been prepared and is currently being reviewed by the authority, and is planned to be signed in 2026.

2.4 Notwithstanding Decision SCSTFRG/13-1, which endorsed the 24-hour application of 20NM longitudinal spacing, it was noted that its application was frequently suspended in 2025 due to the activation of Large-Scale Weather Deviation Contingency Procedure (LSWDCP). During these periods, spacing was often reverted to 50NM or 10 minutes with the application of the Mach Number Technique, significantly degrading the effectiveness of the initiative. To improve the operational efficiency, at SAIOSEACG/4, Singapore raised a proposal of applying 30NM spacing when LSWDCP was in force, which was supported by China, Hong Kong China, Indonesia, Singapore and IATA. Subsequent to further coordination among concerned States/ Administration after SAIOSEACG/4, it was agreed that, whenever operationally feasible, 30NM longitudinal spacing be applied at FIR boundary waypoints of L642 and M771 during activation of LSWDCP, in place of the existing 50NM from 14 April 2025. Despite the occasional suspension of the application of 30NM longitudinal spacing, results presented by Singapore at SCSTFRG/13 indicated that notable improvements in reducing delays were recorded when compared with 50NM spacing. The involved States concluded that permanent implementation of 20NM longitudinal spacing in normal conditions is a key step to support consistent application of 30NM longitudinal spacing during LSWD.

2.5 In 2025, it is observed that the frequency of activation of LSWDCP had been increased significantly. With the increasing traffic operating on L642 and M771, there is an urgent need to apply 30NM spacing during LSWD to ensure ATM efficiency. The full implementation of 20NM longitudinal spacing on L642 and M771 endorsed at SCSTFRG/13 already laid a good foundation for optimising the capacity of the two air routes. In line with Decision SAIOSEACG/4-1 on continued application of surveillance separation and minimizing additional buffers for longitudinal spacing during the activation of LSWDCP, Hong Kong China proposes continued close collaboration among ANSPs to mitigate delays arising from LSWD and consistent application of 30NM spacing on L642/M771 whenever operationally feasible when LSWDCP is in force.

2.6 The full implementation of 20NM longitudinal spacing on L642 and M771 is a crucial step towards optimising air traffic capacity within the APAC Region. Its successful implementation relied on full support and concerted effort of all concerned States/Administrations. To ensure the efficiency and capacity of L642 and M771 could be maintained at a comparable level during LSWD, all concerned States/Administrations are encouraged to demonstrate their excellent collaboration once again which is of paramount importance to the implementation of 30NM spacing during LSWD.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in this paper, including the full implementation of 20NM longitudinal spacing and the progress of applying 30NM spacing during LSWD on L642 and M771;
- b) consider adopting 30NM longitudinal spacing on L642/M771 consistently when LSWDCP is in force; and
- c) discuss any relevant matters as appropriate.

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