INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION

Second Meeting of the Africa - Indian Ocean Aviation System Planning and Implementation Group (AASPG/2)

Livingstone, Zambia, 2 - 6 November 2026

Agenda Item 4: Implementation of safety and air navigation goals, targets and indicators, including priorities set in the Regional Aviation Safety and Air Navigation Plans

Upgrade of the Online Airspace Overflight Clearance Application System

(Presented by ZAMBIA)

SUMMARY

This working paper presents the upgraded online airspace clearance portal developed by the Zambia Civil Aviation Authority (ZCAA) and the Zambia Air Force (ZAF) to automate the airspace clearance process for all foreign and domestic air operators. The upgrade replaces the portal originally developed under contract and was designed to improve system reliability, safety, security and user experience. The collaboration between the Regulator and the Air Force exemplifies the civil-military cooperation encouraged by ICAO, thereby supporting seamless and reliable air transport within the Lusaka FIR.

The action by the Meeting is in **paragraph 3**

Strategic Goals	Every Flight is Safe and Secure Aviation Delivers Seamless, Accessible, and Reliable Mobility for All No Country Left Behind

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Zambia, a Contracting State to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention), became a Party to the International Air Services Transit Agreement (IASTA) on 13 October 1965.

1.2 IASTA provides for the multilateral exchange of the first two freedoms of the air in respect of scheduled international air services, namely the privilege to fly across the territory of another Contracting State without landing and the privilege to land for non-traffic purposes. IASTA thereby facilitates the operation of international scheduled air services.

1.3 Parties to IASTA are therefore expected to facilitate the “file-and-fly” concept, whereby scheduled flights are required only to file a flight plan and fly, without requesting airspace overflight clearance, as States have already received the operators’ schedules in advance. These schedules contain information on when the flights will operate (days and times), the routes, the aircraft types, and whether passengers or cargo are carried. Such scheduled operations are also covered by the Bilateral Air Services Agreements (BASAs) signed between the States of the designated air carriers and the Republic of Zambia.

1.4 Further to this, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has from time to time urged Contracting States to review their authorization procedures for overflight clearances.

1.5 In line with this, Zambia developed the Airspace Clearance Portal as a centralized digital platform and Database that streamlines the submission, management and tracking of aircraft clearance applications. It enables operators to submit requests efficiently, monitor application status in real time, and manage all aircraft under their responsibility through a single, intuitive interface. The portal is accessible on https://clearance.airforce.mil.zm/clearance

2 DISCUSSION

2.1 In 1997, the Minister of Transport and Communications delegated the authority for the issuance of airspace clearances to the Air Force Commander, Zambia Air Force, through Statutory Instrument No. 104 of 1997, The Aviation (Aircraft Navigation Control) Notice. The Notice was issued to establish a framework that ensures adequate collaboration, cooperation and coordination between civil and military aviation stakeholders, and to provide guidance on the implementation and improvement of civil-military cooperation in air traffic management, for the safe and optimal use of the airspace by both parties.

2.2 The evolution of the ATM system requires global, regional and national cooperation between civil and military aviation authorities. Such cooperation ensures the integration of State aviation needs and facilitates the planning required to support the effective implementation of the evolving ATM system. Zambia has a long-standing and strong civil-military cooperation, demonstrated through the successful joint hosting of the ICAO Workshop on Civil-Military Cooperation in Lusaka, Zambia, in 2023 and the consistent participation of the Military in ICAO meetings and workshops.

2.3 To further demonstrate this cooperation, the Zambia Air Force (ZAF), in collaboration with the Zambia Civil Aviation Authority (ZCAA) and Zambia Airports Corporation Limited (ZACL), in 2022 contracted the services of a Zambian consultant to develop a web-based airspace management system to automate the airspace overflight clearance process for air operators.

2.4 The platform was successfully launched but experienced several teething challenges. To address these, the ICT and Air Traffic Services Departments of ZAF and ZCAA established a task force, which redesigned the system with the following notable improvements:

a) A modern, user-friendly interface with an enhanced dashboard that provides clear statistical summaries, intuitive navigation and an improved overall user experience;
b) Comprehensive reporting with graphical representations, enabling operators to perform better data analysis and make informed decisions;
c) Real-time tracking of submitted applications, ensuring transparency and improved communication throughout the process;
d) A robust and intuitive search function, enabling operators to locate applications quickly and efficiently based on relevant criteria;
e) An enhanced, structured workflow across all stages of processing, ensuring consistency, accountability and compliance;
f) Automated email notifications, ensuring timely updates on application status and improved communication between operators and the approving authorities; and
g) A centralized announcements module through which the system administrator publishes official notices and updates, ensuring timely dissemination of important information and enhancing communication across all stakeholders.

2.5 On 20 January 2026, the Airspace Clearance Upgrade Task Force organized a virtual stakeholder engagement, attended by 300 local and international participants, at which the upgraded system was presented to users. Feedback received was subsequently incorporated into the system.

2.6 The upgraded system has significantly improved the turnaround time for airspace clearances and has supported the file-and-fly concept. Statistics for the period January to October 2026 are

provided in the table below:

NUMBER OF REGISTERED USERS	APPROVED CLEARANCES	REJECTED CLEARANCES	TOTAL CLEARANCES	REJECTION RATE
227	4446	469	4915	**9.54%**

2.7 The platform also allows scheduled operators to apply for a block clearance valid for three months, so that, within that period, they need only file a flight plan and fly on the same clearance. Research has continued to be undertaken to further enhance the system to incorporate air navigation billing and enhanced GIS real-time tracking features.

2.8 With improved search, structured workflows, automated notifications and centralized announcements, the system provides an efficient, transparent and user-friendly platform for managing flight clearance applications. It streamlines communication and decision-making between ZCAA and ZAF and the overarching objective of enhancing operational efficiency, regulatory compliance and the user experience.

2.9 This initiative further demonstrates Zambia's commitment to strengthening civil-military cooperation, collaboration and coordination in the provision of air navigation services in the AFI region.

3 ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The Meeting is invited to:

a) take note of the information contained in this working paper;
b) note the progress made by Zambia in improving the process for obtaining airspace clearance to overfly the Lusaka FIR;
c) encourage States to inform their air operators of the use of the Airspace Clearance Portal developed by Zambia; and
d) encourage interested States to consult with Zambia regarding the development and deployment of the Airspace Clearance Portal, in the spirit of the No Country Left Behind (NCLB) initiative.