INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION

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

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Agenda Item 4: Achievement of aviation safety and air navigation objectives, targets and indicators, including priorities set out in regional aviation safety and air navigation plans

STRENGTHENING SUBREGIONAL COOPERATION IN SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR): CAMEROON'S EXPERIENCE IN CONCLUDING BILATERAL AGREEMENTS

(Presented by Cameroon)

SUMMARY	
This information paper presents Cameroon's experience in concluding bilateral aeronautical search and rescue (SAR) cooperation agreements with six neighbouring States between 2019 and 2026. It highlights the consultation and preparatory mechanisms used in developing these agreements and underscores the value of structured cooperation in strengthening cross-border coordination of SAR services in the AFI Region. It proposes sharing this experience and encouraging States to conclude, update and operationalize cooperation arrangements suited to their needs. Action by the meeting: see Section 3 of this paper.	
REFERENCE(S) **REFERENCE(S)**	- Annex 12 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation – Search and Rescue (9th edition, 2024); - IAMSAR Manual (Doc 9731); - AFI Regional Search and Rescue (SAR) Plan.
Strategic Goals	A-Every flight is safe and secure C-Aviation delivers seamless, accessible and reliable mobility for All

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Aeronautical search and rescue (SAR) is an essential component of the civil aviation safety system. Annex 12 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation provides for the organization of SAR services by States, either individually or in cooperation with other States.

1.2. Cooperation between neighboring States is of particular importance when search and rescue operations involve contiguous regions or require the coordinated mobilization of human and material resources across borders.

1.3. In this context, APIRG Conclusion 20/10 urges States to sign SAR agreements with their neighbors to optimize interoperability and operational efficiency.

1.4. Conscious of these challenges, Cameroon has engaged in a structured process of bilateral cooperation with neighboring States, resulting in the signing of six SAR agreements between September 2019 and February 2026. This note presents the key stages and preparation practices that could be shared at the regional level

2. ANALYSIS

2.1. Regional framework and the value of bilateral agreements

2.1.1. Annex 12 and the AFI Regional SAR Plan emphasize cooperation and coordination among States, particularly to facilitate mutual assistance and reduce obstacles to cross-border response. Bilateral agreements can help define the arrangements for such cooperation.

2.1.2. However, concluding an agreement is only one step towards strengthening SAR arrangements. Its practical effectiveness also depends on translating it into coordination procedures, up-to-date operational contact details and, where appropriate, joint exercises.

2.2. Cameroon's experience in concluding SAR agreements

2.2.1. According to the information provided for the preparation of this paper, Cameroon has signed the following bilateral agreements:

Partner State	Date of signature	Place / occasion of signature
Congo	27 September 2019	Montréal – 40th ICAO Assembly
Equatorial Guinea	27 September 2019	Montréal – 40th ICAO Assembly
Gabon	17 September 2020	Dakar – 66th Extraordinary Session of the ASECNA Committee of Ministers
Chad	29 September 2022	Montréal – 41st ICAO Assembly
Central African Republic	17 April 2025	Doha – ICAO International Conference on Facilitation
Nigeria	27 February 2026	Yaoundé

2.2.2. This progressive approach has enabled Cameroon to establish formal cooperation frameworks with six neighbouring States. The agreements span more than six years and reflect sustained efforts towards bilateral consultation.

2.3. Mechanisms that facilitated preparation of the agreements

2.3.1. Several factors and mechanisms contributed to drafting and finalizing the agreements:

- The creation of digital discussion and exchange forums between stakeholders involved in drafting the agreements;
- The establishment of review groups involving ministerial departments in charge of consular affairs, technical administrations, and their supervisory bodies;
- The organization of preparatory missions for the review and finalization of draft agreements;
- The strong involvement of the ICAO Regional Office, which played a facilitator role, particularly regarding the signing of the SAR agreement with the State of Nigeria.

2.3.2. These working arrangements facilitated stakeholder coordination throughout the preparation process. They could serve as useful practices for States seeking to structure bilateral SAR cooperation.

2.4. Prospects for strengthening regional cooperation

2.4.1. Sharing Cameroon's experience could encourage States in the AFI Region to identify cooperation needs with their neighbours and to draw on existing regional templates and guidance when preparing or updating their SAR agreements.

2.4.2. Following signature, particular attention should be paid to defining arrangements for coordination between rescue coordination centres, maintaining operational contact details, establishing assistance procedures and preparing joint exercises. These are proposed as areas for future action and do not represent activities already undertaken under the six agreements presented.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1. The meeting is invited to:

- take note of Cameroon's experience in concluding six bilateral SAR cooperation agreements with neighboring States;
- encourage States in the AFI region to strengthen cross-border cooperation and coordination in SAR, particularly by concluding or updating appropriate agreements and conducting cross-border search and rescue exercises;
- encourage the sharing of best practices in inter-ministerial consultation and agreement preparation, as well as the monitoring of their operational implementation, consistent with the AFI SAR Regional Plan; and
- encourage the establishment of a program of joint search and rescue exercises between neighboring States to ensure the effectiveness of the signed agreements.