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

PANS-OPS Safety Oversight Training

(Presented by Namibia)

SUMMARY

This working paper highlights the ongoing gap in Procedural Air Navigation Services – Operations (PANS-OPS) Safety Oversight Training in the Africa-Indian Ocean (AFI) region. PANS-OPS provides essential criteria for designing instrument flight procedures that underpin safe navigation across the region. The lack of specialized training for regulatory personnel responsible for overseeing PANS-OPS compliance continues to pose a material risk to airspace safety and to States of the AFI region' ability to meet international standards.

This paper was initially presented at the Tenth Meeting of the AFPP Steering Committee held in Dakar, Senegal, from 19 to 21 November 2024. Since then, AFPP has attempted to implement PANS-OPS Safety Oversight Training but has encountered significant obstacles, mainly a shortage of qualified instructors and funding. As a result, the training program has not yet been established.

This paper is therefore submitted to the AASPG to allow the Group to consider these implementation issues and support AFPP by leveraging the broader safety oversight community within the AFI region, including the Safety Management and Oversight Sub-Group (SMO/SG).

This paper recommends a collaborative approach to developing a regionally coordinated PANS-OPS Safety Oversight Training Program, supported by capacity building, financial assistance, and the establishment of specialized training centers, so PANS-OPS oversight training aligns with the designated training arrangements already in place for other safety oversight domains.
Action by the meeting is indicated in paragraph 3.

REFERENCE(S):	• Annex 19 – Safety Management • Annex 11 – Air Traffic Services • ICAO Doc 8168 – Procedures for Air Navigation Services – Aircraft Operations (PANS-OPS) • ICAO Doc 9734 – Safety Oversight Manual • ICAO Doc 10004 – Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP) • AFPP – Regional Strategy for the Implementation of PBN (Performance-Based Navigation) in the AFI region • SC10/24 ATT B – PANS-OPS Safety Oversight Training (Namibia), Tenth Meeting of the AFPP Steering Committee, Dakar, Senegal, 19–21 November 2024
ICAO Strategic Goal(s):	*A – Every Flight is Safety and Secure* *C - L'aviation assure une mobilité fluide, accessible et fiable pour tous*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The African Indian Ocean (AFI) region has advanced aviation safety through initiatives like the African Flight Procedure Programme (AFPP), which has enhanced capacity in PANS-OPS covering flight procedure design, airspace operations, and related quality assurance and approval. However, a key gap remains: the lack of PANS-OPS Safety Oversight Training, which is crucial for flight safety and compliance.

1.2. Namibia raised this issue at the AFPP Steering Committee's tenth meeting in Dakar, which agreed on the need for this training. Despite AFPP efforts, challenges such as a lack of qualified instructors and funding hinder implementation. Since the AASPG oversees safety planning and oversight, this paper seeks their support to address these challenges and advance the initiative.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The AFI region continues to face a significant gap in PANS-OPS safety oversight capability despite considerable progress in Instrument Flight Procedure (IFP) design capacity development through the work of the AFI Flight Procedure Programme (AFPP). While many States and organizations have developed procedure design expertise, the number of qualified PANS-OPS inspectors responsible for regulatory oversight remains insufficient. This shortfall is driven by the limited availability of specialized training programmes, the high cost of existing training opportunities, and inadequate institutional capacity within many civil aviation Authorities.

2.2 The absence of comprehensive PANS-OPS safety oversight training presents both regulatory and operational risks. Without appropriately trained inspectors, States may struggle to ensure compliance with ICAO SARPs, particularly those in Annex 11 and Doc 8168. Inadequate oversight may also contribute to deficiencies in flight procedure design and validation processes, increasing the risk of safety occurrences and the potential issuance of Significant Safety Concerns (SSCs) during ICAO USOAP-CMA audits. These challenges are compounded by the fact that many States in the AFI region do not have the resources or access to training necessary to fulfil their oversight responsibilities effectively.

2.3 A notable finding is that PANS-OPS safety oversight remains the only major aviation oversight discipline without a designated inspector training pathway. Established Generic Safety Inspector (GSI) training programmes exist for Personnel Licensing (PEL), Flight Operations (OPS), Airworthiness (AIR), and all Air Navigation Services (ANS) inspectorate domains, including ATS, AIS, MET and CNS. The lack of an equivalent framework for PANS-OPS oversight creates a clear imbalance in regulatory capacity development and leaves a critical safety function without the structured training support available in other domains.

2.4 Although the concept of PANS-OPS Safety Oversight Training was accepted by AFPP/10, implementation has not progressed as intended. Evidence suggests that the absence of qualified instructors, limited funding, and insufficient institutional support have been key barriers to implementation. Consequently, the region continues to operate without a formal mechanism to develop and sustain PANS-OPS oversight competencies.

2.5 To address this gap, there is a strong case for establishing a regionally coordinated training framework aligned with the inspector training arrangements already available in other aviation safety domains. Such a programme should include training in PANS-OPS design principles and regulatory compliance, safety oversight methodologies, risk management approaches for procedure validation, and continuous competency development for inspectors and safety managers. Equally important is developing a qualified instructor cadre through instructor development and train-the-trainer initiatives, supported by collaboration with AFPP and other organizations with existing expertise.

2.6 The discussion also highlights the need for practical implementation measures, including designating regional training centers, providing technical assistance, and developing sustainable funding mechanisms. Cost-sharing arrangements among Member States could help reduce the financial burden on smaller and resource-constrained States, while a regional monitoring system would enable tracking of training and certification progress and support long-term workforce planning.

2.7 In conclusion, the lack of PANS-OPS Safety Oversight Training remains a critical and unresolved issue that could undermine the safety and efficiency of air navigation services within the AFI region. Given the unsuccessful implementation efforts to date, AASPG intervention and support are essential to help AFPP overcome existing challenges and establish a sustainable training framework. Addressing this deficiency would strengthen regulatory oversight capability, improve compliance with ICAO requirements, enhance aviation safety outcomes, and support the sustainable development of air transport across the region.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The Meeting is invited to:

a) Take note of the information provided in this working paper, including that the proporsal was accepted at AFPP/10 in November 2024, but that AFPP has since faced significant challenges in implementing it, principally a lack of qualified instructors;
b) Note the disparity between PANS-OPS safety oversight training and the designated training already in place for PEL, OPS, AIR and the ANS inspectorate domains (ATS, AIS, MET, CNS); and
c) Support AFPP, including through referral to the SMO/SG for coordinated follow-up, to resolve the implementation challenges and enable the conduct of a PANS-OPS flight procedure Safety Oversight Training programme.