International Civil Aviation Organization

MIDANPIRG/23 & RASG-MID/13 Meetings

(Cairo, Egypt, 14 – 18 June 2026)

Agenda Item 4.3: Other Emerging Safety Matters

DIGITAL PILOT LICENSING IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCE AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL INTEROPERABILITY

(Presented by the United Arab Emirates)

SUMMARY

This Working Paper presents the experience of the United Arab Emirates in the implementation of Digital Pilot Licensing (DPL) as part of its national aviation digital transformation initiatives. It outlines key elements of implementation and highlights regulatory and operational considerations associated with the use and verification of digitally issued pilot licences.

The paper aims to support regional awareness and to initiate discussion on digital licensing within the framework of ICAO Annex 1 and the provisions of Article 33 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation.

Action by the meeting is at paragraph 3

REFERENCE

- Convention on International Civil Aviation, Article 33
- ICAO Annex 1 — Personnel Licensing
- ICAO Doc 9379 — Manual of Procedures for Establishment and Management of a State's Personnel Licensing System

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The aviation sector is progressively adopting digital technologies to enhance efficiency, security and service delivery. In this context, a number of States are exploring the transition from traditional paper-based pilot licences to digitally issued and verifiable licences.

1.2 The United Arab Emirates has initiated a Digital Pilot Licensing (DPL) initiative aimed at modernizing personnel licensing processes while maintaining compliance with ICAO Annex1.

1.3 The objective of the DPL initiative is to enable the secure issuance, storage and verification of pilot licences in digital format while ensuring the integrity, authenticity and regulatory control of licensing data.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The UAE has implemented a digital licensing framework that enables the issuance, renewal and amendment of pilot licences through an integrated electronic system. The framework incorporates digital verification capabilities supported by secure validation tools, allowing authorized

entities to verify licence authenticity. The system is integrated with regulatory processes to ensure consistency, traceability and oversight, and transitional arrangements have been introduced to support implementation.

2.2 The transition to digital pilot licensing introduces considerations within the existing ICAO regulatory framework. ICAO Annex 1 establishes requirements for the issuance and control of licences but does not prescribe a specific format, thereby allowing States to adopt digital solutions provided that compliance with SARPs is maintained. Recognition of licences by other Contracting States is governed by Article 33 of the Convention and is based on compliance with ICAO Standards.

2.3 The implementation of digital licensing systems requires appropriate measures to ensure secure identity management, protection against unauthorized modification and the availability of reliable verification mechanisms. Consideration should also be given to interoperability between State systems and to ensuring continuity of access in the event of system limitations or failures.

2.4 The increasing adoption of digital licensing solutions may require further consideration of harmonized approaches to verification, mutual trust and data exchange between States. In the absence of such approaches, differences in implementation may lead to operational challenges related to recognition and validation.

2.5 The UAE experience may provide useful insights for MID States considering similar initiatives, particularly in relation to implementation approaches, regulatory considerations and operational challenges.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to

a) note the information presented in this paper.

b) encourage MID States to share their experience and challenges related to digital licensing initiatives.

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