



International Civil Aviation Organization

MIDANPIRG/23 & RASG-MID/13 Meetings

(Cairo, Egypt, 14 – 18 June 2026)

Agenda Item 2: 2.3 Update from States and International Organizations

**EFFECTIVE SAR COORDINATION AND EVIDENCE BASED ASSESSMENT
IN THE MID REGION**

(Presented by the United Arab Emirates)

SUMMARY

This paper addresses a recurring implementation aspect related to cross border Search and Rescue coordination in the MID Region, as identified through successive MIDANPIRG and RASG-MID monitoring activities. Regional reporting has consistently reflected the status of SAR coordination arrangements and associated implementation progress. As reflected in ICAO Assembly Working Paper A42-WP/197, approximately 62% of planned SAR arrangements in the MID Region had been formalized by 2025, with the remaining arrangements subject to ongoing coordination processes.

Notwithstanding these circumstances, several States have established SAR systems, including Rescue Coordination Centers, communication infrastructure and operational procedures consistent with Annex 12 - Search and Rescue and the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual, Doc 9731. In certain cases, however, the absence of formalized arrangements with neighbouring States, attributable to factors beyond the control of the State, may influence the manner in which effective SAR coordination is demonstrated within the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme USOAP-CMA evidence based assessment framework.

In line with the outcome of ICAO Assembly 42, this paper proposes a regionally harmonized approach emphasizing the demonstration of SAR coordination through objective and verifiable evidence of operational capability, while maintaining SAR agreements as an important means of strengthening coordination. The paper further proposes enhancement of regional SAR implementation monitoring to generate structured evidence supporting ICAO's ongoing work related to the review of evidence used in assessing effective implementation of SAR coordination.

Action by the meeting is at paragraph 4.

REFERENCES

- ANNEX 12 - SEARCH AND RESCUE
- ANNEX 11 - AIR TRAFFIC SERVICES
- ANNEX 19 - SAFETY MANAGEMENT
- DOC 9731 - IAMSAR MANUAL
- DOC 4444 - PANS-ATM
- DOC 9735 - USOAP-CMA MANUAL
- ICAO ASSEMBLY 42 REPORT, TECHNICAL COMMISSION (A42-TE)
- MIDANPIRG/19-22 AND RASG-MID/9-12 REPORTS
- USOAP-CMA 2024 PROTOCOL QUESTIONS - ANS AUDIT AREA

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Annex 12 establishes the obligation for Contracting States to provide SAR services and to ensure coordination of their SAR organizations with those of neighbouring States to facilitate the prompt and effective provision of assistance to aircraft in distress. In Chapter 3, Annex 12 provides that “3.1.1 Contracting States shall coordinate their search and rescue organizations with those of neighbouring States.”

1.2 Annex 12 further includes a Recommended Practice encouraging States to establish agreements with neighbouring States to strengthen SAR cooperation and coordination, including provisions related to the entry of SAR units into respective territories.

1.3 This establishes a clear distinction between the mandatory obligation to coordinate and the recommended mechanism of agreements to strengthen that coordination.

1.4 Annex 11 and PANS-ATM, Doc 4444 establish alerting service requirements and ensure interoperability between ATS and SAR functions.

1.5 The IAMSAR Manual, Doc 9731 provides guidance on SAR system organization, emphasizing operational coordination, RCC capability, communication arrangements and SAR plans of operation.

1.6 The ICAO Assembly at its 42nd Session, through the Technical Commission, recognized the challenges faced by some States in concluding SAR agreements and agreed on the need to review the evidence required when assessing effective implementation related to coordination between SAR organizations within the framework of USOAP-CMA activities. This provides a clear basis for strengthening evidence based approaches to demonstrating SAR coordination consistent with ICAO provisions.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Regional monitoring confirms continued progress in SAR implementation within the MID Region, including RCC establishment, SAR planning, and coordination mechanisms.

2.2 Annex 12 requires coordination between SAR organizations. Agreements are identified as an important Recommended Practice to strengthen such coordination.

2.3 The IAMSAR Manual establishes that effective SAR coordination is achieved through arrangements, procedures, and communication systems enabling timely and reliable coordination between RCCs.

2.4 Accordingly, SAR coordination is inherently operational and should be demonstrated through objective and verifiable evidence of RCC capability, communication effectiveness, coordination procedures, SAR plans of operation, communication records, SAR exercises, operational coordination records and documented efforts to formalize arrangements with neighbouring States.

2.5 SAR system effectiveness is further demonstrated through operational outcomes, including communication timeliness, coordination efficiency and responsiveness, consistent with the performance based approach reflected in Annex 19 and the Safety Management Manual, Doc 9859.

2.6 Where formal agreements remain under development due to factors beyond the control of the State, the absence of such agreements should not be interpreted, in isolation, as evidence of ineffective SAR coordination, provided that operational coordination capability is established and demonstrably implemented.

2.7 The USOAP-CMA ANS Protocol Questions provide a structured framework for assessing SAR as an integrated State system, including PQs 7.481, 7.505, 7.507, 7.513, 7.517, 7.519, 7.521, 7.525, 7.529, 7.537, 7.543 and 7.545.

2.8 Satisfactory implementation across these interrelated PQs provides system level assurance of effective SAR capability and coordination, consistent with Annex 12 and IAMSAR guidance. This approach ensures that the assessment reflects the effectiveness and sustainability of the SAR system, consistent with the objective of USOAP-CMA, whereby all relevant elements are established, implemented and supported by objective evidence.

2.9 This approach is fully aligned with ICAO Assembly 42 outcomes, which recognized both the challenges associated with concluding SAR agreements and the need to review the evidence used in assessing effective implementation of coordination between SAR organizations.

2.10 The structured regional implementation monitoring proposed in this paper is intended to generate objective and operationally relevant evidence of SAR coordination effectiveness, which may support ICAO's ongoing work related to the review and refinement of evidence considerations within the USOAP-CMA framework.

3. PROPOSED APPROACH

3.1 States are encouraged to continue efforts to formalize SAR agreements with neighbouring States in accordance with Annex 12 Recommended Practices.

3.2 States are encouraged to maintain and enhance operational SAR coordination arrangements, including RCC communication systems, coordination procedures and integration with ATS alerting services.

3.3 States should establish and maintain comprehensive and verifiable evidence demonstrating effective SAR coordination, including SAR plans, communication records, coordination procedures, operational records and SAR exercises.

3.4 States are encouraged to utilize the relevant SAR related USOAP-CMA ANS Protocol Questions as a structured framework for demonstrating effective implementation and ensuring consistency in evidence preparation.

3.5 The existing regional SAR implementation review should be enhanced to capture structured evidence of coordination effectiveness, including formal arrangements, RCC communication, coordination procedures, SAR plans, communication records, SAR exercises, operational coordination evidence and documented efforts to formalize arrangements. The enhanced review should support regional monitoring and provide factual inputs for ICAO's ongoing work related to the review of evidence used in assessing effective implementation of SAR coordination.

4. ACTION BY THE MEETING

4.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in this paper;
- b) recognize the implementation aspects associated with the status of SAR coordination arrangements with neighbouring States;
- c) acknowledge that effective SAR coordination is determined by operational capability and objective and verifiable evidence of implementation, in accordance with Annex 12, Annex 11 and the IAMSAR Manual;

- d) agree that the demonstration of SAR coordination may be assessed on the basis of the totality of evidence, including, as applicable, formal arrangements, operational procedures, RCC communication capability, SAR plans of operation and coordination records;
- e) encourage States to continue efforts to formalize SAR agreements with neighbouring States, while ensuring effective operational coordination arrangements;
- f) encourage States to utilize the relevant SAR related USOAP-CMA ANS Protocol Questions as a structured framework for demonstrating effective implementation;
- g) agree to enhance regional SAR implementation monitoring to improve visibility of coordination effectiveness and support continuous improvement;
- h) agree to the Draft Conclusion in paragraph 5; and
- i) request the ICAO MID Office, through the ATM/SAR Sub Group, to consolidate the outcomes of the regional SAR implementation review and identify lessons learned relevant to the demonstration of effective SAR coordination under USOAP-CMA, in support of Assembly 42 Technical Commission direction on the review of evidence used in assessing effective implementation of SAR coordination.

***MIDANPIRG/23 & RASG-MID/13 CONCLUSION XX: EFFECTIVE SAR
COORDINATION AND
EVIDENCE BASED
ASSESSMENT IN THE MID
REGION***

That, in order to support effective SAR coordination and contribute to ICAO's ongoing work on evidence based assessment:

- a) States be encouraged to demonstrate SAR coordination through objective and verifiable evidence of operational capability;*
- b) States be encouraged to continue efforts to formalize SAR agreements with neighbouring States;*
- c) States be encouraged to utilize the relevant SAR related USOAP-CMA ANS Protocol Questions as a structured framework for evidence preparation;*
- d) the ICAO MID Office, in coordination with the ATM/SAR Sub-Group, support the enhancement of regional SAR implementation monitoring and the identification of lessons learned related to SAR coordination evidence;*
- e) the outcomes of the regional SAR implementation review be used, as appropriate, to support ICAO's ongoing work related to the review of evidence used in assessing effective implementation of coordination between SAR organizations; and*
- f) the outcomes be reported to MIDANPIRG/24 and RASG-MID/14 meeting.*