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THIRTEENTH AIR NAVIGATION CONFERENCE

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COMMITTEE B

- Agenda Item 7: Operational safety risks**
7.3: Other implementation issues

STRENGTHENING UAE NATIONAL PRESENCE IN ATC

(Presented by the United Arab Emirates)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper presents the United Arab Emirates strategy to invest in the national human capital, specifically ATCOs and to ensure that future-planned requirements for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) air navigation services (ANS) are met.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Sheikh Zayed Air Navigation Centre (SZC), under the auspices of the GCAA of the UAE has experienced, as with many States, the pressure of the global air traffic control officer (ATCO) shortage.

1.2 Public awareness of the resulting negative impact towards the economic development of the nation created from an ATCO shortage has been a key foundation and motivation for the UAE's initiative.

1.3 The GCAA has strongly taken on-board the next generation of aviation professionals' (NGAP) twenty-year forecast produced in 2010 to establish the basis of a retainable national ATCO inventory.

1.4 To safeguard requirements for future ATCO demand, the GCAA has implemented numerous programs and enhancements to ensure increased quantity and quality of ab initio ATCO students, enabling efficient and effective investment in longer term tenures of ATCOs at SZC.

1.5 Nature of the current generation and the change in the demographic shape has lead the subject matter experts in the initiative to come up with bespoke and robust means to gain the interest of the youth and their guardians.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 For more than seven years the GCAA has adopted a diversified approach to its air traffic control (ATC) recruitment campaign and training programs. These programs include:

a) Innovative outreach campaigns targeting:

- 1) schools covering different age groups and genders;
- 2) colleges & universities; and
- 3) national Service* candidates.

**The UAE has enforced compulsory military service to its citizens –optional for females- in 2014 to include Gen Y age group of the population (millennials) born in 1984 and onwards.*

b) Strong representation of the profession at various career fairs to promote careers within ANS.

c) Hosting the yearly Future Aviators Camp, used to promote aviation related careers in the UAE. The Future aviators camp includes:

- 1) mentor speeches by different aviation professionals;
- 2) lectures and workshops about educational facilities that provides aviation programs; and
- 3) competitions and recreational programs deeply aviation-oriented.

d) Hosting an Innovation Week where school students are invited to ANSP site tours, creating awareness and interest. The students gets to be an ATCO for the day and spend time controlling aircraft on the ATC simulator, whilst also learning the varying aspects of the job. Individuals who are showing aptitude and those who are interested in pursuing careers in the aviation field in the future get their interest captured on a database in order to contact them for possibilities in the future.

e) Use of social media platforms to create awareness and recruit potential candidates through interactive posts such as questions and answers, polls, surveys and competitions.

f) Collaboration with art-houses to create activity and colouring books targeting even a younger part of the community for an increased awareness amongst different age groups. This was done in Arabic and English languages.

g) Negotiations with mobile app developers to create ATC-related games to target the interests of millennials by adopting an edutainment approach. It is believed that more interest will later positively reflect proportionally to the number of applicants in the future. These games would be an aid and a possible test platform to evaluate an applicant's ability to have the needed skills to become an ATCO.

- h) Creating aviation-related giveaways along with gifts, toys and stationary items to strengthen the fondness of the profession in the youth by being present in their day-to-day activities.
- i) Streamlining the recruitment process of ATCO applicants.
- j) Psychometric testing of candidates to focus the direction of recruitment towards candidates who will be able to successfully complete the rigorous ATCO training program.
- k) Due to the complexities related to the UAE airspace the ATCO candidate's sector validations are selected according to a skills assessment completed during the early stages of training. Once the validated ATCOs increase their operational experience, a progressive operational training program will continue.
- l) ATC course adjustments in line with forecasted traffic growth.
- m) Adopted competency-based training (ICAO10056).

2.2 The application of this diversified approach used by the GCAA has enabled a greater intake of higher quality candidates and generated a more effective return on investment against the ATCO validation rates. The appropriateness of the promotional activities and events chosen have delivered a greater intake of UAE national candidates in support of the UAE's nationalisation program, which in turn supports the overall national agenda of the UAE.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The Conference is invited to note:

- a) the initiatives undertaken by the GCAA with regards to the ATC recruitment campaign.
- b) the UAE's adoption of the NGAP objectives and the innovative methods used to tackle the future challenges; and
- c) that the UAE offers to share from its experiences and lessons learnt to other States in support of their development of their own ATC recruitment plan.

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