



International Civil Aviation Organization

**The Sixth Meeting of the APANPIRG ATM Sub-Group
(ATM/SG/6)**

Hong Kong, China, 30 July – 03 August 2018

Agenda Item 6: AOP, MET, AIM, SAR

SEARCH AND RESCUE AGREEMENTS AND LETTERS OF AGREEMENTS

(Presented by the United States)

SUMMARY

This paper discusses the lack of search and rescue agreements across the Asia/Pacific region and seeks to develop possible solutions.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Due to the effort of the ICAO Bangkok Office and the openness of States within the Asia/Pacific region, the lack of search and rescue (SAR) agreements is well documented. The ongoing implementation of aircraft tracking requirements under the Global Aeronautical Distress and Safety System (GADSS) will require even closer coordination among States and their SAR services for the rapid sharing of alerting information.

1.2 Effective sharing of this information to the responsible stakeholders requires well defined, accurate and readily accessible global FIR and SAR region data, plus reliable emergency 24-hour contact details for the aircraft operators, ATS units and rescue coordination centers.

1.3 Discussions in ICAO regional meetings revealed concern that the sample SAR agreement (shown in IAMSAR Manual Volume I, Appendix I) is too formal and too comprehensive for many States to complete. A solution proposed in some of these meetings is to use a simpler format than now provided in the IAMSAR Manual, such as the ICAO concept of 'letter of agreement (LoA),' used by civil aviation authorities on an operational level, between air traffic services (ATS) units.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 IAMSAR Manual Volume I, Appendix I *SAR Agreements*, has a sample agreement with sections that may be used or adapted as the Parties agree. The four-page sample agreement is comprehensive and may contain provisions not needed by all States. An explanatory note for the sample SAR agreement clearly states that different terms may be used instead of 'agreement', as long as the document meets the intent of international conventions to serve as the basis for cooperation and the provision of expeditious and effective SAR services.

2.2 However, many States continue to have difficulty in completing SAR agreements with neighboring States and, many believe a simpler sample agreement could provide a solution. If a simpler sample agreement can be created which meets the basic intent of ICAO Annex 12 – *Search and Rescue*, then this might result in the negotiation of more SAR agreements.

2.3 A common practice within ICAO is for national civil aviation authorities to use a 'letter of agreement (LoA)' between ATS units. The ICAO Asia/Pacific Regional Office provided a clearer understanding in its *Asia/Pacific SAR Plan Version 2.0 September 2016*, paragraph 2.7:

"...A SAR agreement can be in the form of 'Letter of Agreement' (LoA) or a Memorandum of Understanding or other acceptable term indicating a lower form of arrangement for operational matters between SAR service providers (such as rescue coordination centers (RCCs) and/or rescue sub-centers (RSCs) or a more formal agreement for arrangements between governments concerned."

2.4 This would mean that a 'formal agreement' could use the sample agreement shown in IAMSAR Manual Volume I, Appendix I; and, the LoA type of document would benefit from a less comprehensive format and amount of content.

2.5 Another ICAO practice, at least since publishing of the paper version of the regional air navigation plan (RANP), is to associate SAR regions with the lower flight information region. In fact, the paper editions of the RANPs had charts showing the lower flight information regions and SAR regions, and their coordinates. Coordinates on the SAR chart indicated where the SAR region was different from the lower FIR.

2.6 ICAO Annex 12, Chapter 3 *Cooperation*, has paragraph 3.1.5 "Recommendation: Contracting States should enter into agreements with neighboring States to strengthen search and rescue cooperation and coordination..." If the focus of the aeronautical SAR agreement is on "cooperation and coordination", then it may be feasible to refer to the regional air navigation plan for the other needed details.

2.7 ICAO regional meetings indicate that the LoA is effective between neighboring ATS units but there appears to be a lack of such arrangements with neighboring aeronautical RCCs/joint RCCs/maritime RCCs. ATM SG 6 may be able to address this concern by discussing steps such as:

- How can SAR authorities meet the requirement for well defined, accurate and readily accessible SAR region data necessary for the Global Aeronautical Distress and Safety System?
- What are the key elements of a SAR agreement and determine if a simpler sample (less formal and less comprehensive) should be created. (The IAMSAR Manual template has 10 elements: Introduction; Objectives and Scope; Responsibilities; SAR regions; RCCs; Cooperation; Finances; Application; Modification; and, Duration, Withdrawal and Discontinuation.)
- What steps can be taken, including possible interim steps, to build the political will to establish a global network of SAR regions closely cooperating and coordinating together? The implementation of GADSS will rely upon such a global SAR service and the automation of alert information distribution

2.8 A leading question is: What steps can be taken, including possible interim steps to build the political will to establish a global network of SAR regions closely coordinating and cooperating together? The implementation of GADSS will rely upon such a global SAR service and the automation of alert information distribution. Agreements can help provide a solution.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETINGS

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in this paper regarding search and rescue agreements and letter of agreement; and
- b) discuss possible beginning steps to assist States in the negotiation of search and rescue agreements, or comparable letters of agreement, or other acceptable term for a document to strengthen search and rescue cooperation and coordination between States.

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