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WORKING PAPER

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SEVENTH WORLDWIDE AIR TRANSPORT CONFERENCE (ATCONF/7)

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Agenda Item 3: Strengthening regulatory and institutional frameworks
3.3: Strengthening emergency planning mechanism and consumer protection for a resilient aviation system

CONTINUITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE AAAVF SYMPOSIA: ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL

(Presented by the Air Crash Victims' Families' Federation International (ACVFFI))

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper reviews the continuity of the Symposia on Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims and their Families (AAAVF). The First Symposium, in 2021, produced thirty recommendations which the Council endorsed and which drove normative advances, including Standard 8.43 of Annex 9. The Second Symposium, in 2024, by contrast, did not generate a comparable set of actionable outcomes. ACVFFI does not intend this Conference to change the institutional category of these events (Category 4), although the ideal would be to raise them to Category 2 so that their conclusions could be submitted to the Council and the Assembly. Alternatively, it asks that future symposia follow an organizational model with a clear, inclusive and predictable procedure to validate participants' recommendations and transmit them to the Council.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims and their Families (AAAVF) Symposia are the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) principal specialized forum for exchanging experience on assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families, bringing together all aviation actors concerned with this matter and elevating their recommendations to the Council and the Assembly for approval.

1.2 The Air Crash Victims' Families' Federation International (ACVFFI) pressed for the inclusion of a dedicated event in the Organization's calendar and played a central role in the 2021 Symposium (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria). At the 42nd Session of the Assembly it presented A42-WP/290, already calling for a formal mechanism so that each edition would conclude with validated outcomes submitted to the Council.

[1] English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish versions provided by ACVFII.

1.3 The Seventh Worldwide Air Transport Conference (ATConf/7) is not the body that classifies ICAO meetings, but it can recommend to the Council a working method that prevents a costly forum from being limited to an exchange without a considerable effective outcome. Assistance to victims and families cannot afford to waste this opportunity every three years.

2. PREVIOUS SYMPOSIA

2.1 The AAAVF 2021 Symposium produced thirty concrete recommendations. The Council endorsed them. That process contributed to the upgrade of Recommended Practice 8.46 to Standard 8.43, to the establishment of the Working Group-AAAVF, to the training course and to the iPack. The value of the event lay in its results, not merely in its being held.

2.2 The AAAVF 2024 Symposium (Haarlem) had a different format and did not generate an equivalent package of actionable recommendations with the same effectiveness as AAAVF 2021.

2.3 The Administrative Instructions for the Planning and Convening of ICAO Meetings provide that Category 4 events (seminars and symposia) do not, of themselves, produce formal recommendations or conclusions. That rule explains part of the problem. It does not require that the substance evaporate. The 2021 precedent shows that a symposium can identify priorities and that the Council can make them its own.

3. IMPLICATIONS

3.1 ACVFFI is not requesting that AAAVF Symposia be reclassified as Category 2 at this Seventh Conference. That request is not related to the Organization’s category system at this forum and would divert the debate.

3.2 What is asked is more modestly useful: that each future edition be designed with a procedure announced in advance to: (i) collect proposals from participants, including family associations; (ii) validate in plenary a short set of recommendations; (iii) transmit that set to the Council; and (iv) report to the Assembly following the Symposium.

3.3 That procedure must guarantee the inclusion of ACVFFI - an international organization recognized before ICAO and recipient of the 44th Edward Warner Award at the 42nd Session of the Assembly for its record of work - in planning, the programme and the conclusions. Inviting entities that are not representative of victims and their families while reducing the role of ACVFFI weakens the purpose and legitimacy of the forum.

3.4 Geographic continuity also matters. The first two editions were held in Europe. The next should rotate by region, so that Member States with the greatest implementation needs can participate and take ownership of their contributions.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 A symposium without actionable results consumes resources and does not serve the purpose required, all the more so given the low implementation by Member States. A symposium that produces validated recommendations and elevates them to the Council, as in 2021, and subsequently to the Assembly, changes the Standard and the practice.

4.2 ATConf/7 can help the Council set that expectation of method, without altering the category of the event at this Conference.

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