

**ACI/LAC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
ACTIVITIES AND TRENDS IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AT AIRPORTS IN THE REGION**

Mr Chairman, our host Mr Raymond Ybarra and Mr Vreedenburgh of ICAO, distinguished members of the audience, Ladies and Gentlemen all:

It is an honour as Chairman of our Regional ACI/LAC Environmental Committee, and indeed a pleasure to share with you the information available to us on the trends in environmental protection practices at some of the Airports in our Latin America and Caribbean Region. It is our hope that this sharing of information will have the effect of better informing ICAO and its individual members and other organisations here represented of the challenges faced by our airports in the region in delivering quality service to our customers.

In 1998 the Governing Board of ACI mandated the World Environment Standing Committee to investigate best practices at member airports world-wide with a view to benchmarking these airports. Each Regional Representative on the Committee was, as a result, requested to investigate the environmental practices within their respective region and report back to the World Committee. To this end a comprehensive questionnaire was

developed and circulated to all the members within the region. This Questionnaire covered the following areas of airports operation:

- i) Environmental Policy
- ii) Environmental Management
- iii) Water Quality (including De-icing)
- iv) Air Quality
- v) Noise
- vi) Waste Management
- vii) Landscape and Ecological Issues
- viii) Energy Management

Responses were received from 23% of the membership, i.e. from five (5) countries representing 48 airports within the region. Bearing in mind the number of ACI/LAC members, it could be argued that this small sample was not necessarily representative of the practise in the region. However, inadequate as this level of response appears, it did provide the only authoritative information on practises and procedures at our airports.

Subsequent to our report back to the World Committee, we have received additional responses so that at present we have responses from some eight (8) countries representing 53 airports in the region. Our summary findings today are, perhaps, a little more representative of the practises in the region.

The attached appendix summarises the latest results. I urge you to look at them and reflect on their significance.

The effort required to collect and collate the information received was very involved as communication between our respective members was quite poor. It was in the end, thanks to the energy of Mr Fernando Oliveira, our Secretary based in Venezuela, that the exercise was accomplished at all.

One of the lessons learnt from this exercise was that the environmental needs of our region are best served by an active structured Environmental Committee of the regional members.

Although the ACI is a world body it operates very much through a “regional” structure. Each of the six regions of ACI has the ultimate responsibility to plan and direct its own programme of activities and in so doing, to emphasise its own areas of interest needs and opportunities. Naturally, these activities are coordinated and where there are issues that traverse regional boundaries, inter-regional (world) fora are created to address them.

The absence of an active regional environmental committee means that issues common to our region are only addressed by the inter-regional fora, which in this case is the ACI World Environment Standing Committee, if they happen to be common to other regions whose representatives are

mandated by their own regional committee to raise these issues in that forum. By the same token, issues unique to our region are not necessarily addressed by that body as there is little opportunity for that body to be properly informed of the needs.

The benefits, therefore, of having a Regional Committee is for one, to provide a forum for the environmental issues of our region to be discussed and for us to share with each other our common experiences with a view to providing solutions to problems and also to afford meaningful and informed representation of our region at the World Environment Standing Committee.

Incidentally, this holds true not only for the Environment Committee but for all the other committees within the ACI, viz.: finance, engineering, safety, facilitation, economics, etc.

Following representation by the regional representative to the Board of ACI/LAC at their Meeting held in Aruba in 1999 July 13, permission was granted to form a Regional Environmental Committee.

The very first meeting of this Environmental Committee was held in Kingston, Jamaica in November 1999. That meeting was attended by some eleven delegates representing seven countries of our region. Here we would like to recognise the generosity of the World Standing Committee for

inviting the regional delegates attending this first meeting to observe the proceedings of the World Committee whose 13th meeting was held at the same venue on the two days preceding the inaugural meeting and also for their participation in the Committee meeting.

The significant decision taken at the first meeting of the Committee was to establish small work teams with each team being assigned the task of analysing particular areas of response to the Questionnaire mentioned earlier. Based on the results of the analysis, each group was required to highlight the positive and to propose measures to be adopted to address whatever shortcomings were identified.

As is usual in most Committees, some areas were more thoroughly analysed than others; however, it was heartening to know that some work was done which could and did inform future decisions.

At the 2nd Committee Meeting, which was only recently concluded, the recommendations of the various work teams were reviewed and discussions held to try to chart the way forward for the Committee.

The shortage of critical resources in the areas of finance and training was identified as the main factors, which could limit future achievements. Nonetheless, it was broadly agreed that each airport within the region would set a target to achieve international certification (ISO14000) within as short

a time as the available resources will permit. This should be the key objective.

The sequence of activities in the process were summarised thus:

- i) To conduct Environmental Management Audit of the present facilities to determine the “gap”, and
- ii) To develop an Environmental Management System for each facility.

These should provide:

- a) Operational Benefits
- b) Financial Benefits
- c) Corporate Image Benefits

i) Environmental Management Audit

The main deliverable of the Environmental Audit would be adequacy of information to put together an appropriate training programme aimed at all levels within the Organisation:

Directors

Senior Managers

Middle Managers

Supervisors, etc.

Staff

ii) Environmental Management System will include:

Environmental Policy

Targets and Objectives

Implementation Programme

Communication Strategy

Training Programme

Audit Cycle, etc.

This is an evolutionary process but if properly conducted, it should permit the establishment of priorities and the adoption of strategies to encourage full participation of management and staff.

To summarise, given the diversity of resources, culture, habits, language, level of development that exist between countries of our rather expansive region, it is not surprising that there is a large “gap” existing between those airports that are large, well provided for and well regulated, and those that are not so large, not so well provided for and not so well regulated.

The first step in the cycle to achieving an acceptable level of Environmental Management at our airports is recognising that a need exists, and this is where some of us in the region are today.

With recognition should come the will to effect improvements, always recognising the major limitation, viz., training in human resource and finance.

The commitment to effect improvements should be followed by a strategy for implementation, which is, itself, subject to monitoring, fine tuning, etc.

After our recent deliberations, we are left with the distinct impression that the members of our region are fully committed to improving the physical environment of their airport community by developing and maintaining sound environmental practices, which are sustainable. To acquire these objectives, much help and encouragement is needed. Some of you in this room represent Organisations which can help to make this “dream” of international certification a reality, we urge you to assist wherever you can.

When we do and when we succeed we will be all the better for it. Failure, you will realise, is not a sustainable option.

I thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen for your time and hopefully, your interest.

Norman P. Saulter
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