



**WORKING PAPER**

**ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION**

**TECHNICAL COMMISSION**

**Agenda Item 30: Aviation Safety and Air Navigation Policy**

**30.3 Relevant Outcomes of the High-level Conference on COVID-19, Safety Stream (HLCC 2021)**

**SUPPORT FOR AIRCRAFT OPERATORS AFFECTED BY COVID-19 AND MEASURES FOR FUTURE TRAFFIC RECOVERY**

(Presented by Japan)

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Due to the impact of COVID-19, air traffic demand has decreased significantly around the world, and aircraft operators have faced a difficult financial situation.

In such a situation Japan Civil Aviation Bureau (JCAB) has assisted in the area of aircraft operations, as presented below:

- a) JCAB temporarily suspended the focus on efficient flow of aircraft providing aircraft operators with shorter flight routes for some city pairs;
- b) JCAB temporarily expanded free-route airspace; and
- c) JCAB worked collaboratively with aircraft operators to accommodate their requests for the establishment of new aviation demand, such as scenic flights.

JCAB has made efforts to maintain the skills of its air traffic controllers in the slow traffic situation. JCAB has also implemented measures to ensure safety and efficiency in the coming years of increased traffic volume.

**Action:** The Assembly is invited to:

- a) note that JCAB has supported aircraft operators affected by COVID-19 and taken measures for future traffic recovery and that it will continue to provide support for operators even after the pandemic is resolved;
- b) continue to pay attention to the demands of aircraft operators and consider additional support measures as the situation requires; and
- c) request ICAO and its Member States to take actions to maintain safety and efficiency during the post-Covid-19 traffic recovery period.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to the Safety and Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency Strategic Objectives.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	Not Applicable
<i>References:</i>	

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Support for aircraft operators and maintaining the skills of ATCs.

1.1.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has forced aircraft operators around the world to reduce flights and revenues, and in response, JCAB is pursuing the following:

- a) providing support in the area of aircraft operations;
- b) temporary free route airspace expansion; and
- c) maintenance of air traffic controllers' skills and training of trainees to maintain safety at all times in the face of reduced flights worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic has blocked the flow of people in Japan as well. Japanese airlines have also been forced to suspend or cancel various scheduled flights.

## 2. DISCUSSION

2.1 **Overview of support for aircraft operators**

2.1.1 **Shortening of the flight planned routes:**

2.1.1.1 In Japan, for the orderly implementation of air traffic control, it is required to plan the flight route defined by AIC in advance. In the current situation, where the traffic flow is reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, JCAB has offered pre-arranged routes to be planned to reduce flight distances, regardless of the routes defined by AIC. These are available during periods of significant traffic downturn.

2.1.2 **Flexibility in Conditional route (CDR) operations**

2.1.2.1 CDRs are ATS routes that can be planned for instrument flights during a certain time period and are publicly announced. CDRs are set by the ATM center the day before a day when training/testing airspace is not in use. To make the use of CDRs even more effectively, we have decided to offer more flexibility. For the time slots that have been publicly announced once, the time available for CDRs is extended by re-issuing the announcement when the training and testing airspace is no longer in use on that day.

2.1.3 **Relaxation of user preferred route(UPR) restrictions**

2.1.3.1 UPR is a method of flight planning in the Pacific airspace whereby the operator creates a flight plan at his/her discretion, taking into account the aircraft, flight time, weather forecast, etc. Under normal circumstances, it is necessary to plan a route that is separate from Pacific Organized Track System (PACOTS) routes, which are ATS routes, but during the period of reduced traffic due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some restrictions have been relaxed to allow planning of routes that overlap with PACOTS. We are looking into the possibility of further relaxing UPR restrictions to assist operators.

2.1.3.2 ※PACOTS: ATS routes configured daily over the Pacific Ocean; PACOTS has priority over UPR.

#### 2.1.4 **Conducting sightseeing flights**

2.1.4.1 Under circumstances in which there is no choice but to cancel regular flights, many sightseeing flights are planned using aircraft that are not in use due to the suspension of operations. In these flights, the airlines are able to set flexible flight routes, which has made it easier to carry out sightseeing flights. JCAB is supporting the efforts of airlines to capture new demand. Since October 2020, the number of sightseeing flights has increased significantly. We are accepting requests for sightseeing flights over Japan from not only Japanese airlines but also foreign airlines, and as of the end of June 2022, 11 airlines in 2 countries have achieved a total of 151 sightseeing flights.

### 3. **HOW TO MAINTAIN CONTROLLERS'S SKILLS AND TRAIN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS**

3.1 Currently, the traffic volume has decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but in preparation for future traffic volume recovery, JCAB needs to think about maintaining the skills of air traffic controllers and the training system.

3.2 Regarding skill maintenance, all air traffic controllers have been kept accustomed to working in a heavy traffic volume environment by regularly creating such an environment using simulators, etc., even during the current period in which traffic volume has decreased.

3.3 For those who have been training to acquire qualifications during the period when the traffic volume has decreased, instead of on-the-job training (OJT), they have spent a considerable amount of time on simulator training and tried to improve their skills. Furthermore, in anticipation of the timing when traffic volume will recover, JCAB has conducted simulator training in advance in an environment with increased busyness to prepare for the recovery of traffic volume.

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