



WORKING PAPER

ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

TECHNICAL COMMISSION

Agenda Item 24: Aviation Safety and Air Navigation Priority Initiatives

SUPPORTING STATES THROUGH REGIONAL COOPERATION

(Presented by the Council of ICAO)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many States still encounter difficulties in fulfilling their obligations under the Chicago Convention, primarily due to challenges such as inadequate funding and limited resources. Regional Safety Oversight Organizations (RSOOs), Regional Accident and Incident Investigation Organizations (RAIOs) and other regional cooperation mechanisms have been established to provide support to States in a range of safety oversight and investigative activities to help address these challenges.

This paper presents ICAO's efforts to assist States, RSOOs and RAIOs in addressing these challenges, explores the benefits of regional cooperation and includes key actions required to enhance their effectiveness.

An overview of past and forthcoming initiatives designed to improve efficiency, sustainability, as well as synergies with the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) is also presented herewith, to foster a coordinated global approach to safety oversight and investigative capabilities.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) urge States that are members of RSOOs and RAIOs to establish sustainable funding mechanisms, appropriate legal frameworks and adequate organizational structures to strengthen RSOOs and RAIOs and actively use the services and support they provide;
- b) urge States to:
 - 1) support ICAO in the development and implementation of the RRAP, RSOO and RAIO Cooperative Platforms, associated workshops, documentation and guidance material, as well as implementation support activities;
 - 2) further enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of RSOOs and RAIOs and to avoid duplication of efforts; and
 - 3) contribute to ICAO's Safety Fund (SAFE) to enable ICAO to provide safety-related/implementation support to address the needs of States, as well as regional cooperation initiatives; and
- c) adopt the Resolution on Regional Cooperation in Appendix A, to supersede Assembly Resolution A40-6.

<i>Strategic Goal:</i>	This working paper relates to <i>Every Flight is Safe and Secure</i> and <i>No Country is Left Behind</i> .
<i>Financial implications:</i>	The activities referred to in this paper will be subject to the resources available in the 2026-2027-2028 Regular Budget and/or from extra budgetary contributions and/or voluntary contributions.
<i>References:</i>	Doc 10186, <i>Report of the Technical Commission of the 41st Session of the Assembly</i> Doc 10184, <i>Assembly Resolutions in Force (as of 7 October 2022)</i> Doc 10115, <i>Report of the Thirteenth Air Navigation Conference</i> Doc 10004, <i>2023-2025 Global Aviation Safety Plan</i> Doc 9946, <i>Manual on Regional Accident and Incident Investigation Organization</i> Doc 9734, <i>Safety Oversight Manual, Part B — The Establishment and Management of a Regional Safety Oversight Organization ICAO Policy on Implementation Support to States</i> ICAO Policy on Implementation Support Provided to States

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme Continuous Monitoring Approach (USOAP CMA) identified that States continue to face challenges to establish sustainable safety oversight systems and aircraft accident and incident investigation mechanisms due to multiple reasons, including difficulties establishing sustainable funding mechanisms, appropriate legal frameworks and adequate organizational structures among other reasons. Regional Safety Oversight Organizations (RSOOs) and Regional Accident and Incident Investigation Organizations (RAIOs¹) have emerged as essential mechanisms to support States in fulfilling their safety oversight and aircraft accident investigation obligations by providing shared expertise and resources. Some of these organizations are also expanding their scope to include security capabilities. However, for these organizations to operate effectively they require strong frameworks, clear guidance and structured support, including support at a political level. ICAO plays a crucial role in strengthening these organizations by developing comprehensive policies, guidance and fostering collaboration to ensure these organizations are equipped to support States in building capacity for aviation safety oversight and accident investigation at both regional and global levels.

1.2 Ensuring the effective establishment and sustainability of these regional cooperation mechanisms, as well as the State's oversight capabilities is critical to enhancing global aviation safety. With the adoption of the *ICAO Policy on Implementation Support Provided to States*, ICAO is actively engaged in providing implementation support to address the needs of States. These activities, coupled with ICAO's support of regional cooperation mechanisms, are critical to provide the necessary support to States to help address deficiencies and establish sustainable safety oversight and accident investigation systems.

2. PROGRESS ON REGIONAL COOPERATION AND IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

2.1 ICAO's approach to enhancing regional cooperation is multi-faceted and is reflected in the various activities and programmes being undertaken to support States and their engagement with regional cooperation mechanisms. This approach enables ICAO to provide support to regional mechanisms through networking and partnerships, assessments and monitoring, developing guidance and documentation, as well as the provision of implementation support, with the goal of increasing States' oversight capabilities.

2.2 ICAO established RSOO and RAIO Cooperative Platforms (CPs) for the purpose of creating a forum for these organizations to exchange information and best practices and to share and collaborate on activities in support of regional safety and accident investigation activities. As a result, these organizations are cooperating in the development of manuals and checklists, and in providing technical assistance. The CPs also allow ICAO to share insight on technical areas of interest, and facilitate peer support, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange. This cooperation is evolving towards formalized support between organizations through agreements that aim to further strengthen regional aviation oversight and investigative capabilities.

2.3 The 40th Session of the Assembly adopted Resolution A40-6, which supports the implementation and further development of the Global Aviation Safety Oversight System (GASOS). Following the decisions of the Assembly, ICAO has continued to further advance GASOS by developing tools, processes and procedures to support the programme. However, the implementation and sustainability of the programme has faced several challenges, and ICAO is currently working to adopt a more sustainable and manageable approach to GASOS, making it necessary to rescope the assessment programme. As a

¹ In this paper, the term RAIO encompasses an RAIO or an Investigation Cooperative Mechanism (ICM) indistinctively, which would be any regional or sub-regional accident and incident investigation body that assists a group of States in meeting their accident and incident investigation obligations or carries out accident and incident investigation activities to support a State or group of States.

result, ICAO is transitioning GASOS to the RSOO and RAIO Assessment Programme (RRAP) which more accurately reflects the intent of the programme. This evolved programme will provide an RSOO or RAIO with a score at the completion of an assessment rather than recognition, help to address limited resources by reducing the scope, as well as to enhance synergies between the USOAP and RRAP programmes.

2.4 ICAO global events have focused on strengthening the aviation safety and accident investigation capabilities of regional organizations while increasing awareness of their roles, activities, and challenges. ICAO leverages these events to improve communication and coordination between Member States and partners with regional cooperation mechanisms, while also discussing support for regions needing to establish or strengthen an RSOO or RAIO. In 2023, ICAO and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) hosted the Second RSOO Forum on Global Aviation Safety (from 10 to 12 October 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya), where participants recognized and agreed on the need to transition the former Global Aviation Safety Oversight System (GASOS) to the new RSOO and RAIO Assessment Programme (RRAP). The Aviation Safety and Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation Symposium (from 19 to 21 November 2024 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates) promoted cooperation in accident and incident investigation, as well as explored ways to strengthen RAIOS and Investigation Cooperative Mechanisms (ICMs). These events emphasized the need to advance the development of the RRAP and to foster collaboration among States, ICAO, RSOOs, RAIOS, international organizations, and industry to address safety issues efficiently and streamline implementation support.

2.5 With involvement from over 150 States in regional initiatives, it is essential that ICAO maintains its commitment to providing continuous support and guidance to enhance the capacities and sustainability of RSOOs and RAIOS. Formalizing RSOO and RAIO functions within the ICAO framework reflects their increasing contribution in safety oversight, accident and incident investigation, and their support to States through technical expertise, resource pooling, and oversight capabilities.

2.6 In line with its commitment to help States meet their obligations, ICAO provides, inter-alia, targeted guidance and implementation support to strengthen regional cooperation mechanisms to address States' challenges and build sustainable safety oversight systems. The *ICAO Policy on Implementation Support Provided to States* emphasizes a needs-based approach to developing and deploying implementation support activities. This policy aims to drive sustainable changes that enhance the capacity of States to manage and oversee their aviation systems through a *One-ICAO* approach. In order to provide needed implementation support to regional cooperation mechanisms and States, it is necessary to work with partners and Stakeholders for voluntary contributions. The SAFE Fund, which is supported by voluntary contributions, serves as the primary mechanism to finance safety priorities in alignment with this policy. ICAO has since been refining processes and procedures to deliver implementation support more effectively and efficiently, fostering a more collaborative and coordinated approach across the Organization in identifying needs and deploying support activities.

3. ENHANCING REGIONAL COOPERATION TO SUPPORT STATES' NEEDS

3.1 ICAO conducted its first post-COVID RRAP of the Civil Aviation Safety and Security Oversight Agency of the East African Community (CASSOA) in October 2024. Assessment Questions (AQs) are the main tool used to conduct these assessments, which are managed through the web-based RRAP Electronic Management System (REMS). Utilizing lessons learned during that assessment and aiming to optimize scarce resources, ICAO decided to further evolve the RRAP process for future evaluations incorporating a revised methodology and streamlined process that is better focused on the capabilities and qualifications of the organization. This transformation will enable the RRAP to be an effective tool in supporting RSOOs and RAIOS in increasing their capacities and capabilities—and create synergies between the RRAP and USOAP, ultimately maximizing ICAO resources. In this context, ICAO is also aligning its internal processes for USOAP and RRAP by developing a pre-evaluation mechanism. This mechanism, using a standardized procedure, will enable the Secretariat to direct the RSOO or RAIO

to the appropriate audit or assessment process, depending on the type and level of support delegated to each organization.

3.2 It is essential for ICAO to regularly update its guidance to provide support for the establishment, operation, and sustainability of RSOOs and RAIOS. Updated guidance, including revisions to the *Safety Oversight Manual*, Part B — *The Establishment and Management of Regional Safety Oversight Organization* (Doc 9734B), will equip these organizations with the tools needed to enhance efficiency, optimize resources, and help States meet regulatory and oversight responsibilities. ICAO is also developing a workshop to provide further support to States, RSOOs and RAIOS by clearly defining and optimizing delegation concepts involved in regional cooperation. Through practical guidance, peer-view (via the cooperative platforms), and regular assessments (such as the RRAP), ICAO helps to strengthen the organizational and legal frameworks as well as the operations of RSOOs and RAIOS, ensuring they provide effective support to States and contribute to a more robust, harmonized global aviation system.

3.3 ICAO is also supporting States' needs by providing more effective and efficient implementation support. ICAO HQs and Regional Offices are working closely together with donors and partners to assess and develop suitable projects and programmes to address needs of States and regional cooperation mechanisms, and allocate voluntary contributions under the SAFE Fund. Between 2023 and 2025, this collaboration has resulted in targeted implementation support of 43 projects valuing 1.9 million USD from the SAFE Fund. ICAO Regional Offices play a crucial role in identifying specific requirements through their direct engagement with States and submitting proposals for internal review via a new online platform. These proposals are evaluated for determination of appropriate SAFE Fund allocations.

3.4 Furthermore, to support the development, establishment and sustainability of regional cooperation mechanisms it is critical to engage partners and donors for both technical support and funding. Under the Aviation Safety Implementation Assistance Partnership (ASIAP), ICAO has engaged directly with partners to coordinate assistance activities for both States and regional cooperation mechanisms. Over the last triennium, and with the approval of the Implementation Support Policy, direct dialogue with key stakeholders has evolved and increased in order to coordinate, cooperate and collaborate on specific projects and programmes to support regional cooperation mechanisms and States, as well as to garner voluntary contributions. Direct engagement with these stakeholders is paramount to reducing duplication of efforts and ensuring effective and efficient technical assistance.

3.5 To further support and reflect all these activities, it will be necessary to update the ICAO Policy on Regional Cooperation. This will allow for the reflection of current programmes, policies and activities such as the transition of GASOS to RRAP, the RSOO and RAIOS CPs to strengthen regional cooperation initiatives and the provision of implementation support.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 To support States effectively in overcoming common safety challenges, ICAO must continue to evolve its processes and activities, including providing essential implementation support to strengthen regional cooperation mechanisms, thereby ensuring enhanced safety oversight and compliance with SARPs. ICAO's regional cooperation activities and programmes streamlines the utilization of ICAO's limited resources, and are vital, cross-cutting initiatives being undertaken to support States meet their safety oversight obligations. Continued support from States and industry, including voluntary contributions to the SAFE Fund, is essential for ICAO to assist Member States effectively and advance regional cooperation initiatives. Due to these new developments, amendments to Resolution A40-6 are proposed to reflect the progress made regarding regional cooperation activities and programmes.

APPENDIX

DRAFT RESOLUTION FOR ADOPTION BY THE 42ND SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY

~~A40-6~~ **A42-xx: Regional cooperation and assistance to resolve safety deficiencies, establishing priorities and setting measurable targets**

Whereas a primary objective of the Organization continues to be that of ensuring the safety of international civil aviation worldwide;

Whereas ensuring the safety of international civil aviation is also the responsibility of Member States both collectively and individually;

Whereas in accordance with Article 37 of the *Convention on International Civil Aviation* each Member State undertakes to collaborate in securing the highest practicable degree of uniformity in regulation, standards, procedures and organization in relation to aircraft, personnel, airports, airways and auxiliary services in all matters in which uniformity will facilitate and improve air navigation;

Whereas the improvement of the safety of international civil aviation on a worldwide basis requires the active collaboration of all stakeholders;

Whereas the Convention and its Annexes provide the legal and operational framework for Member States to build a civil aviation safety system based on mutual trust and recognition, requiring that all Member States implement the SARPs as far as practicable and adequately perform safety oversight;

Whereas the results of the ~~audits and ICAO Coordinated Validation Missions (ICVMs) conducted under the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme Continuous Monitoring Approach (USOAP CMA) activities~~ indicate that several Member States have not yet been able to establish a ~~satisfactory sustainable national~~ safety oversight ~~and/or investigative~~ systems and some Member States have been identified as having significant safety concerns (SSCs);

Whereas ICAO plays a leadership role in facilitating the implementation of SARPs and the rectification of safety-related deficiencies by coordinating support and harnessing resources among aviation safety partners;

Recognizing the endorsement by the 41st Assembly of the ICAO Policy on Implementation Support Provided to States in 2022 for the provision of needs-based implementation support to States and non-State entities, under a *One-ICAO Approach*;

Recognizing that the ICAO ~~Plans of Action~~ Country Strategies developed under the ICAO Policy for Implementation Support Provided to States, ~~developed for individual Member States~~, serves as a platform to provide, in coordination with other stakeholders, direct ~~assistance implementation support~~ and guidance to ~~these~~ States in resolving their SSCs as well as addressing low effective implementation (EI) of critical elements;

Whereas ICAO has a Policy on Regional Cooperation which is committed to render assistance, advice and any other form of support, to the extent possible, in the technical and policy aspects of international civil aviation to Member States in carrying out their responsibilities pertaining to the *Convention on International*

Civil Aviation and ICAO Strategic Objectives, inter alia by promoting regional cooperation through close partnerships with regional organizations and regional civil aviation bodies;

Recognizing that not all Member States have the requisite human, technical and financial resources to adequately perform safety oversight and/or investigative functions;

Recognizing that the establishment of subregional and regional aviation safety and safety oversight bodies, including regional safety oversight organizations (RSOs), regional accident and incident investigation organizations (RAIOs) and Investigation Cooperative Mechanisms (ICMs), has great potential to assist States in ~~complying with~~ fulfilling their obligations under the Chicago Convention through economies of scale and harmonization on a larger scale resulting from the collaboration among Member States in establishing and operating a common safety oversight and/or accident and incident investigation system;

Recalling that as signatories to the Convention, the obligations pertaining to safety oversight and/or accident investigation rest and remain exclusively with the Member States and that they are responsible for implementing ICAO Standards and may, States may, in this respect, decide on a voluntary basis to delegate certain tasks and functions to RSOs, and RAIOs, based on an appropriate legal instrument and that, when applicable, the word “States” should be read to include RSOs and RAIOs;

Recalling that the Thirteenth Air Navigation Conference (AN-Conf/13) (2018) recommended that ICAO continue developing GASOS to strengthen RSOs and to improve their effectiveness and efficiency in supporting States; ~~while addressing the liability, governance and cost-benefit analysis issues and other concerns raised by the Conference;~~

Recognizing the need to evolve GASOS into the RSO and RAIO Assessment Programme (RRAP) that will assess the capabilities and qualifications of RSOs and RAIOs/ICMs, with the goal to strengthen these organizations and improve their effectiveness and efficiency in supporting States;

Acknowledging the recognition given in Annex 19 to RSOs and their role in discharging delegated State safety management functions on behalf of States;

Recognizing that groups of Member States may decide to establish regional aviation systems, the legal basis of which may be realized through one or a combination of means including, but not restricted to regional frameworks, an international Treaty and national primary legislations, ~~would encompass~~ with the aim of establishing common rules and oversight applicable in the participating Member States;

Recognizing that the assistance available to Member States experiencing difficulties in correcting deficiencies identified through the safety oversight audits, particularly with priority given to those States with SSCs, would be greatly enhanced by coordination amongst all RSOs, RAIOs, Member States, ICAO and other concerned parties in civil aviation operations;

Recalling Assembly Resolution A37-16 that recognizes the establishment of the Safety Fund (SAFE) to serve as a mechanism for collecting and allocating voluntary contributions from States and other donors to support ICAO safety and air navigation programmes to improve the safety of civil aviation by addressing serious safety deficiencies in Member States that lack the financial means to do so; ~~and~~

Recognizing that established regional aviation safety groups (RASGs) have the objective of establishing objectives, priorities and indicators and the setting of measurable targets to address safety related deficiencies in each region while ensuring consistency of action and coordination of efforts;

The Assembly:

1. *Directs* the Council, in partnership with all aviation safety partners, to ~~continue implementing a coordinated and collaborative implementation support programme~~ ~~comprehensive assistance programme~~ that will help Member States to correct deficiencies identified through USOAP CMA, with priority given to the resolution of SSCs;
2. *Directs* the Council to promote the concepts of regional cooperation, including the strengthening of RSOOs, and RAIOS ~~and RASGs, as well as the establishment of objectives, priorities and indicators and the setting of measurable targets to address SSCs and safety-related deficiencies;~~
3. *Directs* the Council to take the appropriate actions to ensure that the specificities of a regional aviation system established by a group of Member States are recognized and integrated in the ICAO framework;
4. *Directs* the Council to ~~support the implementation and further development of~~ evolve and transition the Global Aviation Safety Oversight System (GASOS) into the RSOO and RAIO Assessment Programme (RRAP), including in its aim to leverage synergies with the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP), ~~regarding the necessary measures to strengthen, assess and support RSOOs and or RAIOS in their efforts to assist their Member States in accomplishing certain safety oversight, accident and incident investigation and safety management functions and activities, while ensuring those States maintain understand~~ their obligations and responsibilities under the Chicago Convention;
5. *Directs* the Council to continue to ~~build new and foster existing partnerships with Member States, industry and other aviation safety partners~~ for coordinating and facilitating the provision of financial and technical assistance to States and subregional and regional safety ~~and safety oversight and investigative bodies, including RSOOs and RAIOS, in order to enhance their capacity safety and strengthen safety oversight capabilities;~~
6. *Directs* the Council to continue the analysis of relevant safety-critical information for determining effective means of providing ~~assistance implementation support to States and subregional and regional safety and safety oversight and investigative bodies, including RSOOs and RAIOS;~~
7. ~~*Directs* the Secretary General to continue to foster coordination and cooperation between ICAO, RASGs, RSOOs and other organizations with aviation safety related activities in order to reduce the burden on States caused by repetitive audits or inspections and to decrease the duplication of monitoring activities;~~
- 8-7. *Urges* Member States to give the highest priority to the resolution of SSCs in order to ensure that there are no immediate safety risks to international civil aviation and that the minimum requirements established by the Standards set forth in the ICAO Annexes are met;
9. ~~*Urges* Member States to utilize the Flight Procedures Programme, where available, for PBN implementation and, additionally, to provide assistance (financial or otherwise) to ensure continuity and sustainability;~~
- 10-8. *Urges* Member States to develop and further strengthen regional and subregional cooperation in order to promote the highest degree of aviation safety;

9. *Reminds* Member States, industry and other stakeholders on the need to provide voluntary contributions to the SAFE Fund as requested under A37-16 to ensure that effective implementation support in the area of safety is provided to States and/or regional cooperation mechanisms that are in need of assistance;
- ~~14-10.~~ *Calls* upon all Member States and relevant aviation safety partners, wherever possible, to assist requesting States with financial and technical resources to ensure the immediate resolution of identified SSCs and the longer-term sustainability of the State safety oversight system;
11. *Encourages* Member States to request their RSOOs and/or RAIOS to participate in the RSOO and RAO Assessment Programme (RRAP) to strengthen those organizations and better serve their Member States in meeting their safety and investigative responsibilities under the Convention;
12. *Encourages* Member States to establish partnerships with other States, RSOOs, RAIOS, industry, financial institutions and other aviation safety partners to strengthen safety oversight and investigative capabilities, in order to better discharge State responsibilities and foster a safer international civil aviation system;
13. *Encourages* Member States to foster the creation of regional or subregional partnerships to collaborate in the development of solutions to common problems to build State safety oversight capability and investigative capabilities, and to participate in, or provide tangible support for, the strengthening and furtherance of subregional and regional aviation safety and safety oversight and investigative bodies, including RSOOs and RAIOS;
14. *Requests* the ~~Secretary-General~~ Council to play a leading role in coordinating efforts to assist States to resolve SSCs through the development of ICAO ~~Plans of Action~~ Country Strategies and/or specific project proposals and to assist States to obtain the necessary financial resources to fund such assistance implementation support projects;
15. *Urges* Member States and relevant safety partners to support the implementation of Country Strategies to assist States overcome SSCs, as well as to build sustainable capacity within States;
- ~~15-16.~~ *Requests* the Council to report to the next ordinary session of the Assembly on the overall progress of regional cooperation and implementation of the comprehensive assistance programme support activities; and
- ~~16-17.~~ *Declares* that this resolution supersedes Resolution ~~A39-14~~ A40-6.