



ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

TECHNICAL COMMISSION

Agenda Item 25: Other issues to be considered by the Technical Commission

CELEBRATION OF COSPAS-SARSAT GLOBAL SEARCH AND RESCUE DAY

(Presented by Saudi Arabia)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This working paper provides an overview of the Cospas-Sarsat Global Search and Rescue Day, adopted by the International Cospas-Sarsat Programme to be celebrated annually on 10 September. This observance aims to honour the humanitarian efforts of the many professionals involved in search and rescue (SAR) operations, including mission control centre (MCC) operators, who play a pivotal role in saving lives globally.

Given the essential role of the Cospas-Sarsat system within the ICAO SAR framework as established in Annex 12 — *Search and Rescue* this paper proposes that the Assembly formally recognize this day and support its annual celebration.

It proposes that the Assembly instruct the Secretary General to coordinate with the Cospas-Sarsat Secretariat to ensure ICAO's participation and to encourage Member States to join the annual celebration of Cospas-Sarsat Global Search and Rescue Day.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- note the information presented in this paper;
- instruct the Secretary General to coordinate with the Cospas-Sarsat Secretariat for ICAO to join the annual celebration of Cospas-Sarsat Global Search and Rescue Day and to ensure that the Regional Offices of ICAO circulate information, commemorative posters, and other materials to Member States to mark this annual celebration; and
- encourage States to join the Cospas-Sarsat Global Search and Rescue Day by undertaking activities that raise awareness of the Cospas-Sarsat Programme and the global SAR system.

<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This working paper relates to the Strategic Goal <i>Every Flight is Safe and Secure</i> .
<i>Financial implications:</i>	Activities to be undertaken within the Regular budget.
<i>References:</i>	Annex 12 — <i>Search and Rescue</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The International Cospas-Sarsat Programme is an intergovernmental treaty-based organization formally established in 1988. Its mission includes assisting ICAO in its search and rescue (SAR) responsibilities, in particular by operating a satellite-based system for detecting distress signals from emergency beacons transmitting on 406 MHz. The satellites relay the signals to ground stations called local user terminals (LUTs), which process the data, determine the location of the beacon, and forward the alert information to the appropriate mission control center (MCC), which distributes the alert data to the relevant rescue coordination centres (RCCs) or other SAR authorities.

1.2 The Cospas-Sarsat Council has accepted the proposal of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to designate the 10th of September as Cospas-Sarsat Global Search and Rescue Day, for the recognition of the dedication of SAR professionals working in MCCs, including MCC operators.

1.3 The 10th of September marked the anniversary of the first save by the Cospas-Sarsat System, which occurred in 1982, and it validated worldwide the operational soundness of the System for saving lives. This observance aims to honour the humanitarian efforts of SAR professionals and MCC operators, who play a pivotal role in saving lives globally. The celebration is planned to start in 2025 to observe this day, and it is expected that celebrations will be held annually at each MCC along with aviation stakeholders and partners.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Annex 12 — *Search and Rescue* includes provisions for the Cospas-Sarsat system. Annex 12 outlines the responsibilities of States in establishing and maintaining SAR services, including the use of the Cospas-Sarsat system for distress alerting and location. States are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective SAR services, including the infrastructure and procedures to utilize the Cospas-Sarsat system for timely responses to distress situations.

2.2 Annex 12 mandates that States designate a SAR point of contact (SPOC) for receiving alert messages from the Cospas-Sarsat system. This system utilizes satellites to detect distress signals from emergency beacons (like emergency locator transmitters (ELTs), emergency position-indicating radio beacons (EPIRBs) and personal locator beacons (PLBs) and transmits this information to ground stations for relay to relevant SAR authorities.

2.3 Amendment 19 to Annex 12, adopted by the Council on 18 March 2024, has an effective date of 22 July 2024 and an applicability date of 26 November 2026, requires States to ensure that a 24-hour SAR point of contact is designated for receipt and acknowledgement of Cospas-Sarsat alert data.

2.4 As it can be concluded, the SAR operations and activities involve multiple professionals with different expertise and competencies to ensure an effective SAR service. Therefore, the Cospas-Sarsat Global Search and Rescue Day is an opportunity to acknowledge and honour the humanitarian efforts of SAR personnel. Special recognition is given to the dedicated operators within MCCs and RCCs, whose critical work contributes to saving lives during SAR operations.

2.5 Under the planned celebration of the day, Cospas-Sarsat encourages active participation from all Administrations and their respective SAR networks in commemorating this day. Drawing inspiration from the celebration of air traffic control (ATC) day, the celebration may include seminars, discussions, and social gatherings to be organized within MCCs, RCCs, and with extended SAR

stakeholders to mark the occasion. The ATC day is widely celebrated by aviation stakeholders in honour and respect for the critical role played by ATCOs.

2.6 The celebration also aims to foster greater public awareness of the critical services provided by the International Cospas-Sarsat Programme in saving lives and supporting SAR operations.

2.7 Given the integral role of the Cospas-Sarsat system in international civil aviation SAR, as mandated by Annex 12, it is both appropriate and beneficial for ICAO to formally join the annual celebration of the Cospas-Sarsat Global Search and Rescue Day. This participation would underscore ICAO's commitment to its Safety Strategic Objectives and honour the critical work of SAR professionals worldwide in saving lives.

2.8 ICAO's involvement would serve to amplify the message of the day, fostering greater public and governmental awareness of the life-saving services provided by the Cospas-Sarsat Programme. A formal instruction from the Assembly to the Secretary General would provide the necessary mandate for the Organization to actively participate.

2.9 Effective and wide celebration of the Cospas-Sarsat Global Search and Rescue Day requires a collaborative effort. States should be encouraged to develop their national activities to mark the day. These could include public awareness campaigns, educational events at schools and aviation clubs, and official recognition ceremonies for local SAR personnel. Such initiatives would complement ICAO's efforts and strengthen the global SAR framework.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The Cospas-Sarsat Council has accepted the proposal of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to designate the 10th of September as the annual Cospas-Sarsat Global Search and Rescue Day. This designation provides a valuable opportunity to recognize the dedication of SAR professionals and MCC operators in saving lives, and the success of the global satellite-aided distress alerting system.

3.2 It is obvious that SAR services involve multiple entities and authorities, starting with the detection of distress signals until the end of the rescue activities. Annex 12 outlines the standards and recommended practices for SAR services provided by Contracting States. It provides the framework for establishing and operating SAR services, including the use of Cospas-Sarsat system alert data.

3.3 ICAO's participation is a logical extension of its responsibilities under Annex 12. By joining the celebration, ICAO can enhance the visibility of SAR services, promote the implementation of best practices, and pay tribute to the SAR personnel whose efforts save lives

3.4 The Assembly is therefore invited to support this initiative by instructing the Secretary General to take the necessary actions for ICAO to join the annual celebration of the Cospas-Sarsat Global Search and Rescue Day and to encourage wide participation from Member States.

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