



ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

TECHNICAL COMMISSION

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

CERTIFICATION OF AIR NAVIGATION SERVICES PROVIDERS

(Presented by Saudi Arabia)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This working paper proposes that the ICAO Council allocates the necessary resources to develop guidance material for the establishment of a framework for the certification of air navigation services providers (ANSPs). This work will build upon existing ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) of Annex 3 — *Meteorological Service for International Air Navigation*, Annex 4 — *Aeronautical Charts*, Annex 10 — *Aeronautical Telecommunications*, Annex 11 — *Air Traffic Services*, Annex 12 — *Search and Rescue*, Annex 15 — *Aeronautical Information Services*, and Annex 19 — *Safety Management*, and recognized best practices from States and specialized organizations.

The certification of ANSPs has been a subject of discussion at previous ICAO meetings. The Thirteenth Air Navigation Conference (AN-Conf/13) in 2018, in its Recommendation 3.5/3, called for ICAO to investigate the potential benefits, balanced against the associated costs, of developing provisions and guidance material for the certification of ANSPs. Subsequently, at the 41st Session of the Assembly, the Technical Commission noted the ongoing applicability of AN-Conf/13 Recommendation 3.5/3 and agreed to refer the matter to the appropriate expert group for further consideration.

The paper also provides an overview of the framework adopted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for certifying ANSPs. It also refers to the 14th Air Navigation Conference (AN-Conf/14) Recommendation 3.1/2, inviting ICAO to undertake a study into the feasibility of establishing an ICAO air navigation efficiency audit programme, or similar initiative, involving States and international organizations throughout the study.

Recognizing the consensus that further work is warranted, the paper proposes that the Assembly takes the next step by supporting the development of ICAO guidance material to assist States in establishing effective and proportionate ANSP certification and oversight systems, thereby enhancing global air navigation safety and efficiency.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) note the information presented in this paper and the background of the certification of air navigation services providers (ANSPs);
- b) approve the allocation of required resources supporting ICAO in developing guidance material to assist States in establishing effective air navigation service provider certification and oversight systems;
- c) encourage States to implement appropriate certification framework of air navigation service providers, where applicable, taking into account the complexity, size, and scope of services provided; and
- d) invite States to support the development of guidance material on air navigation service provider certification and oversight systems and to share, with ICAO, their practices and lessons learned regarding air navigation service provider certification and oversight.

<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This working paper relates to the Strategic Goals: <i>Every Flight is Safe and Secure, and Aviation Delivers Seamless, Accessible and Reliable Mobility for all.</i>
<i>Financial implications:</i>	Allocation of resources from the 2026-2028 budget will be required for ICAO to undertake the development of the requested guidance material. Activities may be supported by voluntary financial contributions and secondments from Member States.
<i>References:</i>	Doc 10184, <i>Assembly Resolutions in Force</i> Doc 10186, A41-TE, <i>Report of the Technical Commission of the 41st Assembly</i> Doc 10115, <i>Report of the Thirteenth Air Navigation Conference (AN-Conf/13)</i> Doc 9750, <i>ICAO Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP)</i> Doc 10209, <i>Report of the Fourteenth Air Navigation Conference (AN-Conf/14)</i> AN-Conf/14-WP/9: <i>Feasibility study into establishing an ICAO Air Navigation Efficiency Audit Programme</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The ICAO has established comprehensive certification frameworks for aircraft operators under Annex 6 — *Operation of Aircraft* and for aerodromes under Annex 14 — *Aerodromes*, recognizing that systematic certification processes are essential for ensuring safety, operational efficiency, and continued regulatory compliance in civil aviation.

1.2 Under Annex 6, aircraft operators must obtain Air Operator Certificates (AOCs) that specify operational specifications, demonstrate compliance with safety management systems, and maintain continued compliance. Similarly, Annex 14 requires aerodrome certification with detailed specifications covering aerodrome infrastructure, facilities, safety management, operational procedures, and emergency response capabilities.

1.3 Despite the critical role of air navigation services providers (ANSPs) in ensuring safe and efficient air traffic management, no equivalent global certification framework exists under ICAO provisions, creating a gap in the safety oversight system that may impact the safety and efficiency of Air Navigation Services' supporting gate-to-gate operations. While many States have implemented their own ANS oversight system to ensure safe and efficient Air Navigation Services supporting gate-to-gate aircraft operations, there is no harmonized ICAO guidance on the subject.

1.4 Similar to many States, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia adopted a comprehensive ANSP certification framework covering the provision of air traffic services (ATS), aeronautical information service (AIS), communications, navigation, and surveillance (CNS), flight inspection service, instrument flight procedures design service (IFPDS), and aeronautical meteorological services (AMET). Regarding the search and rescue services (SAR), the Saudi General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) has designated the principal ATS provider (Saudi Air Navigation Services (SANS)) as the operator of the Saudi Arabian Mission Control Centre (SAMCC), which is considered as a ground segment service provider under the COSPAS-SARSAT framework. The SAMCC monitors the distress alerts and distributes related messages within the service area¹ covering Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Syria, and Yemen.

¹ According to the COSPAS-SARSAT data distribution plan (Ref: C/S A.001 – Issue 8 – Rev.10 October 2024), SAMCC serves seven Supported Search and Rescue Point of Contact (SPOCs) located in Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Syria, and Yemen

1.5 The main regulatory framework used for ANSP certification in Saudi Arabia is composed of GACA Regulation (GACAR) Parts 170 series, which include:

- a) Part 170: defines the common requirements for ANSP Certification. It also defines the contents of operational specifications (OpSpecs) for each type of ANS service;
- b) Part 171: covers the requirements for the certification of an ATS provider;
- c) Part 172: describes the requirements for the certification of instrument flight procedures design service (IFPDS);
- d) Part 173: covers the requirements for the provision of CNS/ATM services and flight inspection service;
- e) Part 175: identifies the requirements for the certification of an AIS and aeronautical charts provider;
- f) Part 177: defines the requirement for SAR service. The SAR service is subject to designation as government entities are involved in the provision of this service; and
- g) Part 179: covers the requirements for the certification of an aeronautical meteorological services provider.

1.6 All these parts are complemented by other GACAR Parts related mainly to safety management system (SMS), ATS licensing, medical certificates, and certification of training organizations. The Saudi GACARs are available online through this link: <https://gaca.gov.sa>. GACA's approach demonstrates the feasibility and benefits of ANS certification system.

1.7 Moreover, under Agenda item 3.1, the 14th Air Navigation Conference (AN-Conf/14) held at ICAO HQ from 26 August to 6 September 2024 support a proposal made by the Secretariat to conduct a feasibility study to identify the potential benefits of an independent, objective and consistent air navigation efficiency audit programme or some alternative mechanism, such as an "assessment" or gap analysis of the management of air traffic flows. The conference adopted Recommendation 3.1/2 related to this subject and invited ICAO to undertake a study into the feasibility of establishing an ICAO air navigation efficiency audit programme, or similar initiative, involving States and international organizations throughout the study. The air navigation efficiency assessment can be part of an ANSP certification framework.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Background of ANS certification from AN-Conf/13 and A41

2.1.1 The subject of ANSP certification was discussed during the Thirteenth Air Navigation Conference (AN-Conf/13) in 2018. As stated in the *Report of the Conference* (Doc 10115, paragraphs 3.41 and 3.42), the conference acknowledged that while the development of ICAO provisions and guidance material for ANSP certification was necessary, a balanced approach was required to weigh the benefits against the potential costs for States, especially those with existing regulatory systems. Consequently, AN-Conf/13 adopted Recommendation 3.5/3 — Certification of ANSPs, which states: "*That ICAO investigates the potential benefits, balanced against the associated costs, of the development of provisions and guidance material for certification of air navigation services providers (ANSPs)*".

2.1.2 The ANSP certification was also discussed at the 41st Assembly. As detailed in the *Report of the Technical Commission* (Doc 10186, paragraph 31.15), the Commission noted the continued applicability of Recommendation 3.5/3 of AN-Conf/13 and agreed to refer the matter to the appropriate expert group for further study.

2.1.3 These past deliberations recognize and show a clear and consistent direction on the need for ICAO guidance on ANSP certification, and the work should proceed progressively, starting with an investigation and development of guidance material rather than adoption of SARPs.

2.2 Rationale for developing ICAO guidance

2.2.1 The development of ICAO guidance material, rather than adoption of SARPs at an initial phase, provides a flexible and effective means to promote global harmonization. It allows States to adapt best practices to their specific operational environments, complexity, and resources.

2.2.2 The guidance material on ANSP certification can provide information on a systematic approach to ensuring that air navigation service providers demonstrate and maintain competencies and compliance in providing safe, efficient, and continuous services across all phases of flight, covering gate-to-gate operations.

2.2.3 Such guidance may enable performance-based oversight by supporting States in establishing clear operational specifications (OpSpecs) that define the scope, limitations, and conditions under which ANSPs must provide the services, including ATS, AIS, CNS, flight inspection service, IFPDS, AMET, AIS and SAR.

2.2.4 The ICAO guidance on ANSP certification should, at least, cover the following:

- a) reference to existing SARPs in Annexes 3, 4, 10 11, 12, 15 and 19, and related PANS, and guidance;
- b) description of the operational specifications for ANSP certification to ensure transparency regarding service capabilities, facilities and infrastructure, geographic coverage, technical standards, personnel qualifications, and safety management system requirements, facilitating effective regulatory oversight;
- c) practical details on the performance-based approach to ANS safety oversight by establishing measurable safety performance indicators (SPIs), safety performance targets (SPTs), and continuous monitoring mechanisms that align with the SARPs and principles outlined in ICAO Annex 19;
- d) the implementation of Safety Management Systems (SMS) as required by various ICAO Annexes, ensuring that ANSPs maintain systematic approaches to safety risk management, safety assurance, safety promotion, and emergency response planning.
- e) the assessment of air navigation efficiency to measure the air navigation performance improvements considering specific key performance indicators such as those published under ICAO GANP performance framework.
- f) the practices for seamless gate-to-gate operations covering standardizing service delivery across different phases of flight, from ground movement control at aerodromes to en-route air traffic management and approach control services;

- g) description of the working arrangements for better coordination between adjacent service providers and stakeholders with formally agreed coordination arrangements such as letters of agreement (LoAs) or service level agreements (SLAs). These arrangements should be listed as part of the operational specifications that must be used for the provision of air navigation services (ANS), and
- h) other topics and subjects identified from the practices and lessons learned from ANS certification frameworks developed by States and Specialized organizations.

2.2.5 By collecting the requirements and practices from specialized organizations and States that have already implemented ANSP certification, ICAO can develop comprehensive guidance covering application procedures, document evaluation, demonstration and inspection phases, and continuous oversight mechanisms. This will promote a more harmonized global approach for ANS certification and oversight.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 Building on the consensus from AN-Conf/13 and the 41st Assembly, the development of ICAO guidance material for ANSP certification represents a pragmatic and essential step toward enhancing the global air navigation safety and efficiency system. It will complement the established certification frameworks for aircraft operators and aerodromes considered as the primary stakeholders interacting with the ANSPs. Collectively, the three stakeholders make a major contribution to the safety and efficiency of international civil aviation.

3.2 The development of ANS certification guidance based on proven practices from Member States will enhance national ANS safety oversight capabilities, improve operational efficiency, and facilitate the seamless provision of gate-to-gate air navigation services.

3.3 This approach considers the outcomes of previous ICAO meetings by focusing on the development of guidance material, which offers direction to Member States while respecting their sovereignty in implementing systems appropriate to their specific operational environments.

3.4 The Assembly is invited to take the next step and support the development of ICAO guidance for ANS certification by instructing the Council to identify and allocate the necessary resources. This action will directly address the needs identified and contribute significantly to enhancing the performance and safety of the global air navigation system.

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