



ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 13: Aviation Security — Policy

PRIORITIZATION OF AVIATION SECURITY WORK IN ICAO AND THE DEVELOPMENT
OF MULTI-YEAR AVIATION SECURITY OBJECTIVES

(Presented by the United Kingdom)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an environment persistent and diversifying threat to aviation, and of ever more constrained resources, effective prioritization of ICAO's aviation security work is more important than ever. Establishing multi-year objectives offers a means for focusing the work of the Aviation Security Panel (AVSECP) and its working groups on substantive issues which will have a positive impact on aviation security, as well as a means for ensuring a joined-up approach across all of AVSECP's working groups, with a greater visibility across the ICAO community.

As an example, AVSECP might establish a risk-based objective of prioritizing reducing vulnerabilities in the air cargo supply chain over three years, reporting on progress to the next Assembly.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- (a) recognize the importance of effective prioritization of aviation security work in ICAO; and
- (b) endorse the development of multi-year aviation security objectives to be coordinated via the Aviation Security Panel and the ICAO Secretariat as part of the prioritization process.

<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This working paper relates to the Strategic Goal <i>Every Flight is Safe and Secure</i> .
<i>Financial implications:</i>	The ICAO activities referred to in this paper are expected to be undertaken within the resources available in the 2026-2028 Regular Budget and/or from extra-budgetary contributions as guided by the ICAO Business Plan 2026-2028.
<i>References:</i>	A42-WP/11 Consolidated Statement on Continuing ICAO Policies Related to Aviation Security

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The history of aviation security in ICAO has been dominated by the committed global response to evolving acts of unlawful interference against civil aviation. With 19 amendments, Annex 17 charts the history of the global response to these threats and vulnerabilities and 7 has become increasingly mature. Nonetheless, we continue to assess that there is an evolving sustained threat to aviation. We cannot rest, and there remains a great deal to do, both to maintain and modernise requirements, and respond to emerging threats. The global community faces a risk that in the absence of a rallying priority defined by a visible threat, or a catastrophic event, we lack a focus in our work, with inadequate prioritization of effort against areas of greatest impact or necessity. Moreover, any change to annex 17 is costly, both in terms of State resource needed to develop and adopt the requirements, and industry investment to implement those changes – ensuring any change is truly necessary given the risk or opportunity context is essential.

1.2 There has recently been common recognition in AVSECP that our ways of working could be improved, both in the response to proposals from States and in the definition of common and specific goals behind which expertise can be rallied.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 At AVSECP/35 the Panel welcomed a proposal from the Panel Member nominated by the UK to develop a methodology aimed at effectively prioritizing the work of AVSECP and its working groups to achieve maximum impact through a risk-based approach, and tasked the Panel Member nominated by the UK with leading work throughout 2024/25 to develop the proposals.

2.2 Through that work the following principles were established:

- The focus is on improving how we decide what to work on, not what we do. Pressure on Government and industry resource in aviation security continues to present challenges. Any activity by AVSECP or its working groups draws on a limited overall resource pool. It is essential that the ICAO Secretariat, AVSECP and its working groups demonstrate best practice in effective utilisation of resource by making deliberate choices as to what must be done, compared to what could be done.
- Prioritization in aviation security should necessarily consider the impact on the global residual risk as a starting point but it also needs to incorporate wider strategic objectives, e.g. those in the GASeP.
- Prioritization should support the efficient and effective operation of AVSECP's working groups, ensuring that the valuable resource provided is put to best effect, and allowing decisions and actions to be made quickly.
- AVSECP should be able to prioritize tasks and actions allocated to it, such as from ICAO Council (reactive prioritization) but it should also be able to set its own priorities (proactive prioritization) that encourage development by members, states and working groups,

2.3 At AVSECP/36 the member nominated by the UK presented the findings of this work, with recommendations across three pillars – short term triage, medium term objectives, and annex 17 implementation. These were endorsed by the panel.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 The publication of the second edition of the Global Aviation Security Plan (GASeP) in 2024, and its 6 priority areas and ambitious targets for increasing rates of effective implementation will do much to guide States, industry and ICAO in their efforts to enhance aviation security.

3.2 To complement this, the work on prioritization made a recommendation that AVSECP should establish multiyear objectives (e.g. 3 years) for developing Annex 17 or aviation security more generally, in a specific area. These multiyear objectives allow AVSECP to proactively establish a priority issue or area for development, with clear, impactful and measurable outcomes, whilst maintaining the ability to respond rapidly to new threats or events. The objectives should be reported to Council's Aviation Security Committee, along with an annual update of progress, and a report to the subsequent Assembly to help raise the visibility of security, including awareness of how it contributes to a safe system. Importantly, this report may also account for delays or changes, if the threat environment requires an immediate alternative focus – aviation security must remain inherently nimble and reactive. The Panel Chair in coordination with the ICAO Secretariat should have overall responsibility for coordinating development and delivery against the objectives. The objectives to be adopted should be sponsored by the AVSECP Working Group Rapporteurs, who will coordinate the integrated delivery development plan, with reporting to AVSECP on an annual basis of measures developed and progress towards implementation.

3.3 This is a similar practice to that of AVSECP establishing and reviewing aviation security strategic objectives (SSOs) to guide its work as had been consistently implemented from the 1990s until the last set of SSOs were issued in AVSECP/21-WP/26.

3.4 As an example, the multiyear objective might be determined using a risk-based approach. The Aviation Security Global Risk Context Statement (RCS) (Doc 10108 – *Restricted*) establishes a score for residual risk on threat types. Accordingly, the RCS provides a means for AVSECP to make an informed decision as to whether the mitigations provided by Annex 17 are adequately achieving their desired security outcome(s). Where AVSECP agrees that its risk tolerance is less than the current residual risk, it might set a priority to develop other means to address the vulnerabilities to reduce the residual risk.

3.5 Additionally, the Universal Security Audit Programme-Continuous Monitoring Approach (USAP-CMA), offers great value in its data set which could be much better utilised through improved AVSECP commissioning of objective and enhanced analysis to help identify root causes of ineffective implementation of Annex 17 Standards.

3.6 A practical example of this could be AVSECP defining a risk-based objective of addressing the vulnerabilities in the air cargo supply chain, which has had particular and challenging prominence throughout 2024/25. This objective could be defined over a three-year period (triennium), with a focus on reducing the residual risk from its current of Medium High to Medium Low, over that period.

3.7 Alternatively, AVSECP might utilise a thematic approach where it seeks to define an outcome for a cross-cutting or significant matter in aviation security. For example, this might focus on considering the impact of human factors on the security system and seek to establish a clear coordination function for ICAO as it did for the Year of Security Culture in 2021.

3.8 The establishment of a multi-year objective offers the opportunity to take a more systematic review of a problem and consider a wide range of complementary solutions with sufficient time to assess their effectiveness in achieving the identified objective. It would also help target global resources on an defined objective. States would be encouraged to focus attention on the objective within their own local, national, and regional contexts, and provide recommendations to AVSECP. Links could be made to a broader global security community via ICAO Security Week and other global and local events and through the ICAO Regional Offices to bring wider stakeholders into the development of proposals and solutions.

4. **SYNOPSIS**

4.1 The approach proposed above offers a means for clearly focusing the work of AVSECP and its working groups on substantive issues which will have a positive impact on aviation security, as well as a means for ensuring a joined-up approach across all of AVSECP's working groups, with a greater visibility across the ICAO community. In an environment persistent and diversifying threat to aviation, and of ever more constrained resources, effective prioritization of ICAO's aviation security work is more important than ever.

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