



ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 18: Capacity Development and Implementation Support – Policy and Activities

BALANCING SECURITY AND SUSTAINABILITY: THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATING AVIATION SECURITY TRAINING CENTRES INTO THE TRAINAIR PLUS PROGRAMME

(Presented by the African Civil Aviation Commission on behalf of 54 African States²)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Working Paper acknowledges the pivotal role played by aviation security in protecting air transport systems, by illustrating the challenges of integrating Aviation Security Training Centres (ASTC) into the Trainair Plus Programme (TPP). The ASTCs are designed to deliver specialized, security-focused training that directly contributes to a safer and more efficient aviation ecosystem. However, integrating AVSEC training into a broader aviation framework, such as Trainair Plus Programme risks diluting the emphasis on critical security content.

The implementation of aviation security training programs must be proactive, not reactive. Furthermore, the new integration model could significantly increase training costs across the aviation security sector, affecting States, airlines, airports, catering services and handling companies, and in turn, undermining the development of essential skills and expertise in these regions.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) encourage ICAO to explore alternative models that preserve the integrity and specialization of AVSEC training within the broader training ecosystem;
- b) request the Council to ensure that the integration of the current ASTC network does not add a burden to States, particularly to developing countries;
- c) request ICAO to assess the operational and financial impact of integration on regional ASTCs, with a focus on sustainability, equitable access, and the long-term viability of training centres. This assessment should particularly consider the financial burdens faced by states and industries, and the potential for some centres to close or reduce their services, leading to regional training shortages; and
- d) urge ICAO to advocate for inclusive consultations with all stakeholders to ensure that proposed reforms align with the principles of capacity-building, assistance, and the “No Country Left Behind” initiative. Consultations should specifically address the potential financial repercussions for local economies and the aviation security sector as a whole.

¹ English and French versions provided by AFCAC.

² Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe

<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Goals: <i>Every Flight is Safe and Secure; No Country Left Behind</i>
<i>Financial implications:</i>	To be determined
<i>References:</i>	ICAO Documents, Assembly Resolution A41-18

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Following Assembly Resolution A41-18, Appendix E, the ICAO Secretariat was directed to advance coordinated, targeted and prioritized aviation security capacity-building efforts globally. Over the past triennium the Secretariat has responded to this call, through work done in coordination with the Regional Offices. The ASTCs have an important role in delivering specialized and security-critical training.

1.2 Aviation security is essential to safeguarding passengers, crew, ground personnel, the general public, aircraft and aviation infrastructure. ASTCs have consistently provided dedicated training to address security threats to prevent accidents and incidents. Over the past year there have been efforts by the Secretariat to transfer the administration of the ASTCs from the Air Transport Bureau to Global Aviation Training under the Trainair Plus Plan with the objective of improving the quality of training.

1.3 However, there are concerns that integrating AVSEC training into the broader TPP may dilute this focus and impose significant financial challenges. For many States, this integration may result in higher training costs and limit participation from low-resourced countries and further strain financially burdened ASTCs. Shifting these efforts into the wider TPP framework may risk undermining their specialization, and the increase in training fees associated with the new system could make it unaffordable for many States and local training providers, thus limiting access to critical training.

1.4 The integration presents financial sustainability challenges for ASTCs, as the TPP's fee structure imposes significant operational burdens. High per diem rates for instructors and elevated course fees could limit access, especially in resource-constrained regions, potentially decreasing participation. The economic impact extends beyond ASTCs to airports, airlines, handling companies, and catering services, as they will also face rising costs associated with training personnel. These increased costs will ultimately be passed down the supply chain, affecting the aviation ecosystem as a whole.

1.5 As training costs rise, these entities may be forced to allocate more financial resources to maintain the necessary levels of security compliance. The additional financial strain on these sectors could lead to operational inefficiencies and reduced capacity to handle emerging security threats effectively. Additionally, airlines and other stakeholders may pass these increased costs onto consumers in the form of higher ticket prices or service fees, which could reduce the accessibility of air travel for passengers.

1.6 The financial strain caused by the integration could force smaller or less financially secure ASTCs to close or scale back their services. Many of these centres have been specifically designed to address local needs and regional security threats, and their closure could severely limit training access for States with limited resources. States that have invested heavily in the establishment and upkeep of these centres will find themselves at a loss, as they would not only lose their infrastructure investments but also experience diminished capacity to develop aviation security skills within their own workforce. The loss of these centres could also have a long-term impact on the local economy, particularly if these centres serve as a source of employment and regional expertise.

2. DISCUSSIONS

2.1 Market Competition and Quality Training

2.1.1 Market competition to attract participants could prioritize enrolment numbers over training quality, contrary to ICAO's "No Country Left Behind" principle. Many regions may be unable to afford centralized TPP training, affecting the overall effectiveness of AVSEC capacity-building. The introduction of higher fees may worsen the divide between wealthier and poorer regions, particularly those with less-established training centres or fewer financial resources. This shift could result in a lower standard of security awareness and preparedness in critical regions.

2.2 Increased Training Costs and Industry Ripple Effects

2.2.1 Aviation stakeholders, including airlines, airports, catering services, and handling companies will face higher training costs as a result of the integration into the TPP. These sectors have traditionally relied on regional centres for cost-effective and specialized training. With the rise in fees under the new model, they will experience increased operational expenses. This is particularly concerning for States with smaller or developing aviation sectors, as these increased training fees could severely limit the number of individuals receiving essential security training. Furthermore, training fees will also likely result in reduced participation from smaller companies within the aviation sector, thus exacerbating disparities in access to high-quality training and security preparedness.

2.3 Instructor Shortages and Delays in Training Delivery

2.3.1 AVSEC instructor shortages may worsen under the TPP, as qualified experts are absorbed into a broader pool. Meeting both security and competency requirements could restrict availability, delay course delivery, or reduce training quality. As qualified instructors move between centres or are absorbed into larger, centralized training systems, regional expertise could be lost, resulting in diminished capacity for effective security training on the ground.

2.4 Administrative Burdens and Reduced Access

2.4.1 Merging ASTC and TPP operations increases administrative overheads. States relying on ICAO assistance may see reduced access to essential AVSEC training, hindering their ability to maintain security readiness against emerging threats. Moreover, administrative costs tied to the new system will likely divert limited resources away from core training activities, further straining the financial capacity of training centres. This will reduce the overall efficiency of training delivery and diminish the ability of states to manage their security programs effectively.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 In light of these challenges, a transparent and inclusive process is vital to address concerns surrounding the integration. Further engagement with ASTC stakeholders and the AVSEC Panel is necessary to determine if their concerns stem from misunderstandings, technical gaps, or deeper disagreements. Feedback should be used to revise the integration strategy, in alignment with ICAO's vision of global inclusivity. However, it is essential that the financial implications of such a model are fully understood, particularly how it could lead to a reduction in training availability, escalate costs for States, and diminish the overall capacity of the aviation security ecosystem. The increase in financial burdens could have far-reaching consequences, affecting not only the accessibility of AVSEC training but also the broader aviation sector's ability to respond to security threats effectively.