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WORKING PAPER

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TECHNICAL COMMISSION

Agenda Item 24 : Aviation Safety and Air Navigation Priority Initiatives

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL SAFETY OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATION MECHANISMS IN THE AFI REGION

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This working paper highlights the vital contribution of Regional Safety Oversight Organisations (RSOOs), Regional Accident and Incident Investigation Organizations (RAIOs), and Investigation Cooperation Mechanisms (ICMs) to strengthening safety oversight and accident investigation across Africa and globally. It recognizes the ongoing role of the Africa-Indian Ocean Cooperative Inspectorate Scheme (AFI-CIS) and Banjul Accord Group Accident Investigation Agency (BAGAIA) in providing technical assistance, peer reviews, and capacity building. It further urges formal ICAO recognition of these regional mechanisms and enhanced support frameworks aligned with the Abuja Declaration, Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP), other regional instruments and calls for an amendment of Assembly Resolution A40-6.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) amend the Assembly Resolution A40-6 as proposed in Paragraph 3;
- b) urge Member States to promote and support participation in regional mechanisms and devise funding mechanisms to support RSOOs, RAIOs and AFI-CIS activities;
- c) urge Member States to establish legal frameworks to enable effective delegation of safety functions to regional and cooperative bodies;
- d) direct the Council to review and amend ICAO's Policy on regional cooperation to formally include RAIOs, ICMs, and cooperative safety oversight enhancement programmes such as AFI-CIS, develop and propose amendments to relevant Annexes of the *Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation* (Doc 7300) to recognize the performance of delegated safety functions by regional and cooperative mechanisms;
- e) instruct the Secretary General to expedite the update of ICAO Doc 9734, *Safety Oversight Manual*, Part B — *The Establishment and Management of a Regional Safety Oversight System* and Doc 9946, *Manual on Regional Accident and Incident Investigation Organization* to reflect current practices; and
- f) instruct the Secretary General to further develop the RRAP programme.

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, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the 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, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This working paper relates to the Strategic Goals <i>Every Flight is Safe and Secure; and No Country Left Behind</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 Programme Budget and/or from extra budgetary contributions as guided by the ICAO Business Plan 2026-2028.
<i>References:</i>	Assembly Resolutions A38-7, A40-6, A40-13. Doc 7300, <i>Convention on International Civil Aviation</i> Annex 19 — <i>Safety Management</i>, Standard 3.1 and associated notes 1 and 2 Doc 9734, <i>Safety Oversight Manual</i>, Part B — <i>The Establishment and Management of a Regional Safety Oversight System</i> Doc 9946, <i>Manual on Regional Accident and Incident Investigation Organization</i> A41-WP/8 Abuja Declaration on Aviation Safety in Africa AFCAC Plenary Resolutions AFI Plan Steering Committee Reports

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Africa-Indian Ocean (AFI) Region has made tangible progress in improving safety oversight and accident investigation through regional mechanisms, such as Regional Safety Oversight Organizations (RSOOs), Regional Accident and Incident Investigation Organizations (RAIOs), Investigation Cooperation Mechanisms (ICMs) and programmes such as the AFI Cooperative Inspectorate Scheme (AFI-CIS) managed by African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC). These frameworks provide States with essential technical support, help address Significant Safety Concerns (SSCs) and promote effective implementation of ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs), particularly in resource-constrained environments. While ICAO Resolution A40-6: Regional cooperation and assistance to resolve safety deficiencies, establishing priorities and setting measurable targets and the Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP) recognize regional cooperation mechanisms, significant gaps remain in institutional recognition, legal authority and sustainable funding. Similarly, RAIOs, such as Banjul Accord Group Accident Investigation Agency (BAGAIA), have enabled States to meet Annex 13 — *Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation* obligations but lack comprehensive ICAO integration and support for continental expansion.

1.2 In 2019, the Assembly adopted Resolution A40-6. This resolution followed the recommendations of the Thirteenth Air Navigation Conference (AN-Conf/13) and the ICAO/EASA Forum on RSOOs for Global Aviation Safety (Ezulwini, Eswatini, 22-24 March 2017), which resulted in the creation of the RSOO Cooperative Platform in December 2017³ and the launch of the Global Aviation Safety Oversight System (GASOS)⁴ in 2020.

1.3 Recommendations of High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC) - 2021 showed commitment of States to further develop regional cooperation in aviation safety. The practical implementation of those high-level recommendations was discussed during two global events organized jointly by ICAO and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA): the virtual Strengthening Regional Cooperation Conference (20 January 2022)⁵ and the 2nd Forum on RSOOs for Global Aviation

³ A similar cooperative platform for RAIOs and ICMs was created in May 2021.

⁴ State Letter AN 20/8-19/76.

⁵ <https://www.icao.int/Meetings/SRC2022/Pages/default.aspx>

Safety (Nairobi, Kenya, 10-12 October 2023)⁶. The conclusions of the latter underlined the need to adapt the ICAO framework to better recognize RSOOs and emphasized the role of the industry of building partnerships for regional cooperation.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 RSOOs and RAIOS/ICMs play a critical role in ensuring global aviation safety by bridging regulatory gaps, enhancing oversight capabilities, and supporting independent accident investigations, particularly for states with limited resources. The AFI-CIS Programme, coordinated by AFCAC and ICAO under the AFI Plan, has played a critical role in deploying expert teams to States, resolving Significant Safety Concerns (SSCs), and preparing States for Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme Continuous Monitoring Approach (USOAP CMA) activities. Since inception, AFI-CIS has assisted over 40 States, significantly contributing to increased Effective Implementation (EI) scores and regional oversight resilience.

2.2 ICAO has provided States and RSOOs with guidance on various aspects of RSOO establishment and operations through Doc 9734, *Safety Oversight Manual*, Part B — *The Establishment and Management of a Regional Safety Oversight System*, which was last updated in 2013. The conclusions of RSOO studies, as well as the operational experiences of RSOOs, should now be reflected in updated ICAO guidance material. Notably, the enhancement of this Manual was already recommended by the Second High-Level Safety Conference in 2015⁷.

2.3 In parallel, the update of guidance material related to RAIOS and ICMs should be accelerated to address the diverse forms of accident and incident investigation cooperation. The results of the accompanying survey have supported the Accident Investigation Section (AIG) Panel's efforts to develop improved guidance⁸ on ICMs, notably through the update of Doc 9946, *Manual on Regional Accident and Incident Investigation Organization*. The RSOO and RAIO Assessment Programme (RRAP), previously known as GASOS, is a programme for supporting RSOOs, RAIOS/ICMs and their Member States by identifying strengths and areas for improvement by assessing organization's capabilities and qualifications to perform safety functions using tools and methods similar to those of USOAP CMA.

2.4 On the higher level of ICAO's relationship with external parties, the Council adopted on 23 October 2009 ICAO's Policy on Regional Cooperation. This policy does not include the developments in regional cooperation in safety over the last 15 years, does not mention RAIOS/ICMs or ICMs and does not include aspects of technical assistance and cooperation. The Council itself proposed the amendment of the policy in its paper presented at the 41st Assembly (A41-WP/8), however, the policy has not been amended during the last term of the Council.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 The regional cooperation in safety remains high on the agenda of ICAO, however, concrete steps need to be taken to properly reflect the role of regional cooperation mechanisms in the ICAO framework. Therefore, the Assembly is requested to adopt the following amendments to Resolution A40-6: Regional cooperation and assistance to resolve safety deficiencies, establishing priorities and setting measurable targets, in part:

⁶ <https://www.icao.int/Meetings/RSOOForum2/Pages/default.aspx>

⁷ Recommendations 3/1

⁸ ANC Job Card AIGP.023.02

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Recognizing the contributions of Regional Safety Oversight Organizations (RSOOs), Regional Accident and Incident Investigation Organizations (RAIOs), Investigation Cooperation Mechanisms (ICMs), and cooperative safety programmes such as the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) coordinated AFI-CIS Programme in improving the safety oversight and investigation capabilities of African States;

...

Recalling that the Thirteenth Air Navigation Conference (AN-Conf/13) (2018) recommended that ICAO continue developing GASOS to strengthen RSOOs 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 and noting the change of the name of GASOS to RRAP;

Acknowledging the recognition given in Annex 19 to RSOOs and their roles in discharging delegated State safety management functions on behalf of States which should be extended, as appropriate to other Annexes;

The Assembly

...

2a. *Directs* the Council to review and amend ICAO's Policy on Regional Cooperation to formally include RAIOS, ICMs, and cooperative safety oversight enhancement programmes such as AFI-CIS;

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, and, where relevant, that reference to the word 'States' be read to include RSOOs where an appropriately enabling legal framework is in place;

4. *Directs* the Council to support the implementation and further development of the Global Aviation Safety Oversight System (GASOS) of the RSOO/RAIO Assessment Programme (RRAP) regarding the necessary measures to strengthen, assess and support RSOOs or RAIOS/ICMs 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 their obligations and responsibilities under the Chicago Convention.

...

10. *Urges* Member States to develop and further strengthen RSOOs and RAIOS/ICMs and other regional and subregional cooperation in order to promote the highest degree of aviation safety;

...

14a. *Encourages* Member States to reinforce their legal frameworks for RSOOs, ensuring that delegation mechanisms are clearly defined while preserving their responsibilities under the Chicago Convention.

14b. *Encourages* the industry to actively engage in the work of RSOOs and RAIOS/ICMs and provide appropriate support.”