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ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 12: Facilitation Programmes

THE EXPERIENCE IN OVERSIGHT OF AIR TRANSPORT FACILITATION

(Presented by Saudi Arabia)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper presents Saudi Arabia's experience in conducting audits of air transport facilitation and monitoring the effective implementation of the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) of Annex 9 — *Facilitation* at international airports. Effective implementation of air transport facilitation requires close coordination between government agencies and stakeholders operating within the airport environment.

In accordance with Article 22 of the Chicago Convention, International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Member States are obligated to take all practical measures to facilitate international air navigation, including the simplification of customs, immigration and security procedures for passengers and cargo. In this context, auditing air transport facilitation serves as a key mechanism to ensure State compliance with these obligations. Although Annex 9 was first introduced in 1949, its implementation has generally progressed more slowly compared to Annexes related to safety and security.

<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This information paper relates to Strategic Goal <i>Aviation Delivers Seamless, Accessible and Reliable Mobility for All</i> .
<i>Financial implications:</i>	No additional financial implications
<i>References:</i>	Annex 9 — <i>Facilitation</i> Article 22 of Doc 7300, <i>Convention on International Civil Aviation</i> , signed at Chicago on 7 December 1944 and amended by the ICAO Assembly Doc 10042, <i>Model National Air Transport Facilitation Programme</i>

¹ Arabic and English versions provided by Saudi Arabia.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Air transport facilitation involves a set of challenges and responsibilities that States must address in order to comply with the international Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) outlined in Annex 9 — *Facilitation* to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention).

1.2 Oversight of air transport facilitation is a core instrument to verify compliance with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) SARPs. It also promotes better integration among public and private entities responsible for facilitation at airports, leading to enhanced operational efficiency by identifying and addressing system deficiencies. Additionally, audits help ensure a smooth and safe travel experience for passengers, contributing to the overall improvement of airport service quality.

1.3 Article 22 of the Chicago Convention provides that each Contracting State shall: “undertake, so far as it may find practicable, to collaborate in securing the highest practicable degree of uniformity in regulations, standards, procedures and organization in relation to aircraft, personnel, airways and auxiliary services... and to expedite and facilitate navigation by aircraft between the territories of contracting States and to prevent unnecessary delays to aircraft, crews, passengers, and cargo, particularly in the application of immigration, quarantine, customs and clearance procedures.”

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF AIR TRANSPORT FACILITATION OVERSIGHTING

2.1 As part of its commitment to Annex 9 SARPs and efforts to enhance the efficiency of air transport operations, Saudi Arabia launched in 2023 a comprehensive inspection and oversight programme for air transport facilitation at all international airports. This programme aims to ensure compliance with the provisions of Annex 9 and to enhance the level of facilitation services provided to passengers, crew members, cargo, and mail.

3. OVERSIGHT MECHANISM IN SAUDI ARABIA

3.1 The audit mechanism in Saudi Arabia is based on a structured and integrated approach that consists of several key phases designed to ensure sustained compliance with facilitation requirements. The General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) has developed an inspection manual for civil aviation inspectors, outlining audit procedures. In addition, a set of standardized inspection questions has been prepared, based on the SARPs of Annex 9, to assess the level of compliance at each airport.

3.2 The audit process includes the following operational steps:

- a) covers all international airports; and
- b) scheduled visits are determined based on airport size and operational needs.

3.2.1 Notification to Airport Operators and Stakeholders:

- a) an official notification is sent outlining audit objectives and scope; and
- b) basic requirements are specified and coordination is initiated with relevant facilitation entities.

3.2.2 Assignment of a Specialized Audit Team:

- a) team members are selected based on their expertise in facilitation oversight; and
- b) roles and responsibilities are allocated according to the scope of the audit.

3.2.3 Development of an Audit Plan for Each Airport:

- a) identification of focal points within the airport; and
- b) collection of relevant documents and data prior to the visit.

3.2.4 On-Site Audit Execution:

Comprehensive review of all facilitation processes, including:

- a) immigration and customs procedures;
- b) check-in and departure formalities;
- c) baggage handling services;
- d) services for persons with disabilities; and
- e) cargo and storage operations.

3.2.5 Evaluation and Documentation of Observations:

- a) use of standardized checklists to assess various facilitation components; and
- b) classification of findings based on priority, risk level and urgency of resolution.

3.2.6 Preparation of the Preliminary Report:

- a) summary of results and observations is documented; and
- b) report is discussed with airport management and relevant entities.

3.2.7 Development of a Corrective Action Plan:

- a) identification of actions needed to address the findings; and
- b) timelines are defined for the implementation of each corrective measure.

3.2.8 Follow-up on the Implementation of the Action Plan:

- a) monitoring of corrective actions in accordance with the agreed timeline; and
- b) follow-up visits are conducted where necessary to verify full compliance.

3.2.9 Preparation of the Final Report:

- a) final assessment of compliance with Annex 9 SARPs and
- b) report is submitted to senior authorities to support continuous improvement in airport facilitation services.

3.3 **Positive Impact of Facilitation Audits**

3.3.1 Improved quality of services at airports through more efficient and seamless facilitation processes for passengers, crew and cargo.

3.3.2 Increased operational efficiency by reducing wait times and enhancing passenger and cargo flow within terminals.

3.3.3 Sustained compliance with ICAO Annex 9, contributing to Saudi Arabia's international standing in the aviation sector.

3.3.4 Enhanced readiness for international audits, enabling successful performance during ICAO assessments.

3.3.5 Strengthened coordination among stakeholders, resulting in improved implementation of corrective measures and collaborative workflows.

3.3.6 Elevated passenger experience through improved infrastructure, streamlined procedures, and reduced operational barriers at airports.

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