



ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

TECHNICAL COMMISSION

Agenda Item 24: Aviation Safety and Air Navigation Priority Initiatives

DEVELOPMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH RISK ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES FOR
AVIATION SECURITY PERSONNEL

(Presented by Kazakhstan)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The evolving and demanding nature of aviation security operations exposes security personnel to unique mental, emotional, and psychological pressures that may affect performance, decision-making, and the overall integrity of the global aviation security system. Unlike pilots and air traffic controllers, where mental health considerations have received focused international attention, aviation security personnel currently operate without globally harmonized mental health risk assessment standards. Recognizing this gap, Kazakhstan proposes the development of comprehensive mental health risk assessment guidelines for aviation security personnel under ICAO's leadership.

The proposed guidelines would establish standardized, science-based approaches for assessing, monitoring, and supporting the mental health and psychological well-being of personnel engaged in critical aviation security functions. This would include pre-employment screening, periodic evaluations, stress management programs, early detection of risk factors, and appropriate interventions, while fully respecting medical confidentiality and cultural sensitivities. Establishing such global guidelines would not only strengthen the human factors pillar of aviation security but also enhance personnel reliability, situational awareness, and resilience across the aviation security sector.

The Assembly is invited to endorse the development of these guidelines as a new ICAO work item, complementing existing aviation security frameworks and supporting the objectives of the Global Aviation Security Plan (GASeP).

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- recognize the critical importance of mental health for aviation security personnel in maintaining effective global aviation security operations;
- invite ICAO to initiate work on the development of global guidance for mental health risk assessment in aviation security roles;
- support the establishment of a multidisciplinary expert group or task force to lead the development of evidence-based, culturally sensitive guidance materials; and
- encourage Member States to share national practices, experiences, and methodologies in assessing mental fitness of Aviation Security (AVSEC) staff.

Strategic
Goals:

This working paper relates to the Strategic Goal *Every Flight is Safe and Secure*.

<i>Financial implications:</i>	
<i>References:</i>	Annex 17 — <i>Aviation Security</i> Annex 19 — <i>Safety Management</i> Doc 10118, <i>Global Aviation Security Plan</i> (GASeP) Doc 8984, <i>Manual of Civil Aviation Medicine</i> Doc 10151, <i>Human Performance (HP) Manual for Regulators</i> Doc 8973, <i>Aviation Security Manual</i> (Restricted)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The aviation industry continues to evolve rapidly in response to new threats, technologies, and operational complexities. Within this dynamic environment, aviation security personnel are often the first line of defence against unlawful interference, bearing a heavy responsibility for safeguarding passengers, aircraft, and infrastructure.

1.2 Despite this, ICAO's existing provisions under Annex 17 — *Aviation Security* do not explicitly address the mental health or psychometric readiness of Aviation Security (AVSEC) staff. Unlike licensed personnel under Annex 1 — *Personnel Licensing*, there is no harmonized global framework for psychological assessment. Global trends such as increased passenger volumes, evolving security threats, and the psychological burden of continuous vigilance amplify the need to assess and support the mental fitness of security personnel.

1.3 As the aviation sector commits to building a culture of safety and security, mental health cannot remain a peripheral concern. In recognition of this critical gap, Kazakhstan proposes that the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) take the lead in developing global mental health risk assessment guidelines tailored specifically for aviation security personnel. These guidelines would contribute to the overall resilience and reliability of the aviation security workforce, supporting the goals of the Global Aviation Security Plan (GASeP).

2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

2.1 ICAO has already taken substantial steps in addressing psychological fitness for pilots and controllers through Annex 1, *Manual of Civil Aviation Medicine* (Doc 8984), and related initiatives. While considerable attention has been given to licensed aviation personnel, there remains an opportunity to extend similar focus to non-licensed yet safety-critical roles, such as those in aviation security. Aviation security personnel operate in high-pressure environments, where the risk of exposure to stressors such as shift work, unpredictable security threats, and emotionally charged passenger interactions is significant. Prolonged exposure to such conditions can impact individual mental health and, by extension, operational performance and decision-making.

2.2 Currently, States apply diverse national practices with varying degrees of rigor, scientific basis, and transparency. This fragmentation hampers global consistency and undermines mutual confidence in personnel reliability.

2.3 The safety of global civil aviation is deeply intertwined with the effectiveness of its security systems. Recognizing the human element as a core component of aviation security, it becomes imperative to ensure the mental fitness of those entrusted with its implementation. Addressing this gap at a global level will promote consistency, accountability, and a proactive approach to personnel well-being.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 It is proposed that ICAO initiate the development of global guidance material on mental health risk assessment for AVSEC personnel. The guidance would:

- a) identify key psychological competencies and risk indicators relevant to AVSEC duties;
- b) recommend appropriate, culturally adaptable screening and monitoring tools;
- c) outline mechanisms for ongoing support, early intervention, and duty reassignment where necessary;
- d) cover integrated stress management and wellness programs to support long-term resilience;
- e) include protocols for the identification and management of psychological distress, burnout, or trauma;
- f) include mechanisms to ensure confidentiality, ethical handling of data, and respect for individual rights and cultural differences; and
- g) encourage integration into State AVSEC quality control and training programmes.

3.2 The framework should be developed in consultation with Member States, mental health professionals, security authorities, and international partners such as International Air Transport Association (IATA), Airports Council International (ACI), and International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).

3.3 The objective is to provide States with a flexible, non-punitive reference model that enhances the wellbeing and reliability of security personnel without infringing on privacy or creating stigmatization. Kazakhstan envisions a framework where ICAO leads the development of scientifically grounded, universally applicable mental health risk assessment guidelines.

3.4 The benefits of such guidelines extend beyond individual health outcomes. A standardized global approach would:

- a) reduce disparities across Member States;
- b) enhance the reliability and vigilance of security operations;
- c) foster a culture of psychological safety, reducing stigma and encouraging early help-seeking; and
- d) support ICAO's goal of building a sustainable, capable, and resilient aviation security workforce.

3.5 These guidelines would align with and complement ICAO's ongoing work under the GAsEP, particularly the emphasis on human factors and capacity-building. They would also strengthen collaboration between ICAO, Member States, medical and psychological experts, and relevant stakeholders in aviation security training and oversight.

4. **PROPOSED WAY FORWARD**

4.1 The development of the proposed guidelines should proceed in a phased and consultative manner, beginning with:

- a) Phase One - A review of existing national frameworks and academic literature on mental health in high-risk security professions;
- b) Phase Two - Formation of an expert working group including psychological professionals, aviation security experts, and legal advisors;
- c) Phase Three - Piloting the guidelines with selected Member States to assess feasibility, cultural fit, and operational impact;
- d) Phase Four - Issuance of formal ICAO guidance and recommended practices for voluntary or phased adoption by States; and
- e) Phase Five - Support through workshops, training modules, and State-specific implementation assistance.

5. **CONCLUSION**

5.1 Mental health and psychological reliability are foundational to effective aviation security operations.

5.2 Developing globally harmonized guidance on this issue would close a critical oversight gap and advance ICAO's leadership in aviation human factors, security, and safety culture.

5.3 Kazakhstan submits that ICAO considers this initiative as a priority under its next triennium work programme and welcomes collaboration with Member States and stakeholders to carry it forward.

— END —