



ICAO

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WORKING PAPER

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Sixth NAM/CAR North American, Central American and Caribbean Working Group Search and Rescue Implementation Task Force (NACC/WG/SAR/TF/6)

Mexico City, Mexico, 28 to 30 October 2025

Agenda Item 2: Search and Rescue (SAR) Global and Regional Affairs
2.1 Follow up on valid SAR Conclusions/Decisions and Deficiencies

ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CHALLENGES FOR SAR IMPLEMENTATION IN THE NAM/CAR REGIONS

(Presented by the Secretariat)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Working Paper presents an analysis of the main challenges faced by Search and Rescue (SAR) Services in the NAM/CAR Regions, using the results of ICAO's Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) as a reference. It requests regional support and collaboration to address the main findings identified.

Action:	Suggested actions are included in Section 5.
<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety• Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency
<i>References:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention)• Annex 12 – Search and Rescue• International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual• CAR/SAM Regional Air Navigation Plan• Integrated Safety Trend (Analysis) and Reporting System (iSTARS) website and tools• USOAP On-line Framework (OLF)

1. Introduction

1.1 States, as signatories to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention), assume a series of responsibilities that entail the obligation to regulate and supervise their aeronautical activities, ensuring operational safety through compliance with ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs).

1.2 Safety oversight is the mechanism by which States ensure compliance with these obligations. The establishment of search and rescue (SAR) services requires a combination of functions related to safety oversight and service provision to ensure that all State's responsibilities are being fulfilled.

1.3 ICAO's Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) focuses on assessing a State's capacity to oversee safety, verifying whether it has implemented the critical elements (CEs) of a safety oversight system effectively and consistently. This program provides ICAO with a means to continuously monitor States' compliance with their safety oversight obligations.

2. Background

2.1 Initially, USOAP activities consisted of regular, mandatory audits of ICAO Member States' safety oversight systems, covering all safety-related provisions of ICAO Annexes 1, 6, and 8.

2.2 The program was expanded in 2005 with the implementation of the Comprehensive Systems Approach (CSA) to include safety-related provisions contained in all Annexes to the Convention. All NAM/CAR States were audited at least once using the CSA or its subsequent version, the Continuous Monitoring Approach (CMA).

3. Analysis

3.1 The SAR area in the Air Navigation Services (ANS) USOAP checklist has 16 Protocol Questions (PQs), which cover critical areas not only for safety oversight but also for the provision of services in accordance with the requirements of Annex 12.

3.2 The results of the USOAP audits conducted in the NAM/CAR Region States over the last five years reveal challenges that merit special attention due to their evident impact on the performance of SAR. While a significant disparity is identified between the capabilities of the NAM and CAR Regions, some elements can be addressed jointly.

3.3 The lack of establishment and provision of SAR services within the territory and areas where the State has accepted responsibility remains a relevant issue for the CAR Region. This structural non-compliance affects all other components of the State SAR system, as the SAR coordination and response actions that the State could implement are not supported by a clearly established operational framework. In this regard, the following limitations can be highlighted:

- Lack of delimitation of the SAR area of responsibility in accordance with the CAR/SAM Regional Air Navigation Plan (RANP).
- Lack of designation of an entity with the authority, legal support, and resources to oversee and coordinate SAR operations.

- Lack of a national SAR plan that coherently reflects the State's capabilities, as well as a discrepancy between what is established and what is implemented in practice.

3.4 Following or as a consequence of the previous point, the failure to establish a Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC) or, where applicable, a Rescue Subcentre (RSC) in each search and rescue region (SRR) where the State has responsibility is a factor of high impact for the CAR Region. Regarding this point, the following discrepancies can be highlighted:

- Lack of evidence of the establishment of an RCC or RSC, as required.
- Failure to establish an RCC or RSC capable of meeting the requirements of Annex 12 and in accordance with the guidelines of the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual (IAMSAR Manual Doc 9731).
- Failure to implement an RCC or RSC capable of meeting the requirements established by the State itself. There is a discrepancy between what is established and what is implemented.
- Limitations regarding the operational capacity of the SAR coordination unit, especially in the case of the RCC, since from an operational perspective, it does not function as an RCC, and other entities must perform its function.
- Lack of operational manuals, human resources, and technological resources for SAR coordination.

3.5 The lack of SAR agreements is the aspect with the highest percentage of non-compliance in the NAM/CAR Regions, with the following non-compliances being noted:

- Lack of coordination agreements between SAR organizations of neighbouring States.
- Lack of SAR agreements authorizing RCCs and RSCs to provide assistance to other RCCs or RSCs upon request.
- Lack of SAR agreements establishing the conditions for allowing the entry of SAR units from other States to search for an accident site and rescue potential survivors.

3.6 The failure to develop and implement a formal training programme for SAR personnel, including SAR inspectors, is an issue that affects the States of the NAM/CAR Regions.

4. Conclusions

4.1 The deficiencies in the effective implementation and operation of the SAR coordination system require the support of State decision-makers, who need appropriate advice regarding the responsibilities the State has already assumed.

4.2 Given the difficulties faced by authorities in taking the necessary corrective measures to address detected nonconformities, many States choose to try to standardize the nonconformity.

4.3 Similarly, the perception that the State can fulfil its responsibilities without adequate implementation of the system is reinforced, assuming that it responds as expected in practice, even though the system has not been configured in accordance with the requirements of Annex 12.

5. Suggested actions

5.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) Take note of the information provided in this Working Paper.
- b) Provide recommendations and propose actions to address the points detailed in Section 3 of this Note.
- c) Request additional support and regional collaboration to meet the requirements established in Annex 12.
- d) Suggest any other actions deemed necessary.