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(Fort-de-France, Martinique, 15 – 17 July 2026)

**Agenda Item 4: Follow-up of the activities of the E/CAR/CATG
4.4 Progress report of the Search and Rescue (SAR) Committee**

PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SEARCH AND RESCUE COMMITTEE

(Presented by E/CAR Civil Aviation Technical Group – Search and Rescue (CATG-SAR) Committee)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
This Working Paper (WP) presents the activities of the SAR Committee in improving the provision of SAR services within the Piarco Search and Rescue Region (SRR). It highlights the challenges within the E/CAR Region in harmonizing regional coordination systems and the critical importance of Annex -12 – Search and Rescue and Document 9731 – The International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) SAR training and procedures.	
Information:	Suggested actions are included in Section 6.
<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	• Every flight is safe and secure • Aviation is environmentally sustainable • Aviation delivers seamless, accessible, and reliable mobility for all • No country left behind
<i>References:</i>	• Annex 12 – Search and Rescue • International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual (ICAO Doc 9731) • E/CAR/CATG/7-WP17, Miami, United States, 26 – 28 July 2023 • E/CAR/CATG/9-SoD, Miami, United States, 28 – 31 July 2025

1. Introduction

1.1 A functional SAR system is a critical humanitarian obligation, embedded within the Chicago convention, and various international agreements. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), in support of the concept, adopted Annex 12 – Search and Rescue to establish Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) for States Search and Rescue (SAR) services, clearly identifying the specific requirements of Air Navigation Service Providers.

1.2 The IAMSAR Manuals (ICAO Doc 9731) further outlines the high-level responsibilities of States and the required functions to support the provision of SAR services. Additionally, the IAMSAR manual provides the operational framework for coordination between Rescue Coordination Centres (RCCs), Rescue Sub-Centres (RSCs), aircraft operators, maritime authorities, and SAR stakeholders.

1.3 States having a national responsibility, must incorporate the requirements of the ICAO to demonstrate that its internal resources are well coordinated and function under an efficient National structure.

1.4 Piarco, functioning as the parent RCC, must develop and execute strategies to overcome National, as well as, the complex challenges associated with the various independent States, Territories, Flight Information Regions (FIRs and TMAs), regulators, maritime areas of responsibility and diverse national agencies within the Piarco SRR.

2. Background and Challenges

2.1 The establishment of a global SAR system within a developing region presents significant challenges. Unlike larger States, with extensive resources, the region must provide internationally compliant SAR services while challenged by limited financial, technical and human resources.

2.2 Key challenges include:

- a) Limited availability of dedicated SAR assets, including aircraft, vessels, communication systems and specialized equipment;
- b) Geographic constraints associated with island environments and extensive maritime areas;
- c) Variations in national SAR legislation, governance structures and institutional responsibilities;
- d) Differences in the maturity of aviation and maritime emergency management frameworks;
- e) Limited opportunities for specialized SAR training, exercises and competency development;
- f) Dependence on regional and international assistance during major SAR events.

2.3 These challenges are not unique to individual States but are common throughout the E/CAR Region. Consequently, SAR capability within the Piarco SRR, cannot be developed effectively through isolated national initiatives alone. A coordinated regional approach is required to ensure harmonization with ICAO Annex 12 and IAMSAR principles.

3. Discussion

3.1 *Piarco RCC SAR Development Strategy*

3.1.1 The Piarco RCC has initiated a structured programme to improve its contribution to SAR services within the Piarco Search and Rescue Region (SRR). This programme focuses on:

- a) Facilitated the escalation of State-level matters to the relevant authorities to support the high-level action and compliance required for international SAR obligations.;
- b) Integrating ICAO Annex 12 and IAMSAR requirements into daily RCC operations through the development and implementation of an SAR operational manual (SAROPS).
- c) Improved the operational capability by the upskilling of staff competencies and implementation of procedures in line with ICAO requirements. To date, forty-eight (48) Air Traffic Controllers (ATCOs) have successfully completed the State approved SAR training program and are competent to provide SAR coordination activities on demand.

The complement of trained staff ensures that SAR services are available on a 24/7 basis as required.

3.1.2 *Development of Operational SAR Competencies*

3.1.2.1 Piarco RCC has initiated the strengthening of operational staff SAR competencies through training in:

- a) Standardized SAR investigation procedures;
- b) Improved coordination methodologies;
- c) Enhanced communication protocols;
- d) Increased familiarity with regional and international SAR systems.

3.1.3 *Integration of SAR Alerting and Information Systems*

3.1.3.1 Piarco RCC is improving capability in the management and coordination of:

- a) COSPAS-SARSAT distress alert messages;
- b) International Beacon Registry Database (IRBD);
- c) Location data and emergency notification systems;
- d) ICAO Location of Aircraft in Distress Repository (LADR);
- e) Global Aeronautical Distress and Safety System (GADSS) requirements.

3.1.3.2 These capabilities improve the speed, accuracy and coordination of SAR response activities.

3.1.4 *Strengthening Regional and Stakeholder Coordination*

3.1.4.1 In the absence of formal LOAs, but in recognizing the importance of regional collaboration, the TTCAA continues to engage with stakeholders to improve interoperability and coordination across the Piarco SRR. These efforts have included direct correspondence with SAR focal points during SAR events, participation in discussions and the development of draft coordination arrangements designed to strengthen communications, facilitate the exchange of SAR information and enhance coordination during distress situations.

3.1.5 *Regional Cooperation and Coordination through the ECAR/CATG/SAR Committee: Flight HI1145 SAR Operations.*

3.1.5.1 SAR coordination activities were undertaken following the disappearance of flight HI1145, a Beechcraft B58T operating from St. Vincent to Tobago on 12 June 2026. After experiencing communication difficulties while in Grenada airspace, the aircraft subsequently disappeared from surveillance displays, prompting ATS personnel to initiate alerting procedures, declare the ALERFA and DETRESFA phases, and activate regional SAR coordination mechanisms.

3.1.5.2 Extensive coordination was conducted with the ECAR States through the ECAR/CATG/SAR Committee, which facilitated information sharing, operational cooperation, and the alignment of search efforts among participating States. ATS personnel also coordinated closely with regional ATS units, military organizations, coast guard services, SAR agencies, and other relevant stakeholders throughout the ECAR

region. Comprehensive air, maritime, and aerodrome searches were undertaken through this collaborative regional effort; however, no trace of the aircraft was found.

3.1.5.3 The review concluded that ATS personnel complied with the applicable procedures contained in the SAROPS Manual and that SAR coordination activities were effectively executed, supported by the strong cooperation of the ECAR States and the ECAR/CATG/SAR Committee. Opportunities for improvement were noted for the further enhancement of regional SAR coordination arrangements, and the strengthening of communication contingency procedures.

4. Recommendations for the ECAR CATG SAR Committee

4.1 Develop a Regional SAR Cooperation Framework - ICAO NACC, E/CAR States and relevant stakeholders should consider the establishment of a regional SAR cooperation framework to support harmonized procedures, common guidance material, information exchange and coordinated implementation of Annex 12 requirements across the Caribbean Region.

4.2 Strengthening Coordination Between RCCs and RSCs - The Piarco RCC and RSCs within the ECAR should establish routine coordination mechanisms, including regular meetings, communication exercises and information-sharing processes to improve regional SAR readiness.

4.3 Improve SAR Training and Competency Programmes - A regional SAR training strategy should be developed to address deficiencies in SAR qualifications and certification. ICAO and States along with other regional organizations should explore collaborative training programmes to reduce costs and increase availability of specialized SAR training within the Caribbean Region.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The development of an effective SAR system within the Eastern Caribbean requires a balanced approach that addresses legislative, institutional, operational and technical requirements. The challenges faced by ECAR States are shared throughout the region and require collective solutions. While individual SAR agencies possess strong professional competencies, sustainable SAR performance depends on the establishment of supporting legal frameworks, clear governance structures and coordinated regional procedures.

5.2 The SAR Committee is committed to advancing SAR capability through alignment with ICAO Annex 12 and the IAMSAR Manual. The strategy adopted focuses on achieving immediate compliance while creating a foundation for long-term humanitarian excellence. A holistic regional SAR development approach will strengthen resilience, improve coordination, support international obligations and ensure that the Eastern Caribbean continues progressing toward a sustainable, globally aligned SAR system.

6. Suggested Actions

6.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) Note the information presented in this WP;
- b) Encourage E/CAR States/Territories/International organisations to continue working with the E/CAR SAR Committee to implement harmonised procedures affecting the Region;
- c) Support the recommendation in (4) above;
- d) Provide guidance on further advancing SAR improvement within the CAR Region.