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Agenda Item 4: Collaborative Approaches to Safety

**REGIONAL REGULATORY HARMONIZATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA: STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE OF THE
ICAO NACC REGIONAL OFFICE**

(Presented by the Secretariat in coordination with COCESNA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This information paper highlights the strategic importance of civil aviation regulatory harmonization in Central America as a mechanism to strengthen safety oversight, optimize limited technical resources and promote a more consistent implementation of ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs). From the perspective of the ICAO NACC Regional Office, the modernization of the regional regulatory framework represents an opportunity to improve regulatory efficiency, strengthen the institutional capacities of States and consolidate regional technical cooperation through common frameworks, the exchange of best practices, and coordinated implementation mechanisms. ICAO, as a strategic facilitator and technical partner, recognizes the potential of this initiative to become a regional model of regulatory collaboration, if it is supported by effective governance, sustained commitment from States and alignment with international standards.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Every Flight is Safe and Secure• No Country Left Behind• The International Civil Aviation Convention and Other Treaties, Laws and Regulations Address All Challenges• The Economic Development of Air Transport Assures the Delivery of Economic Prosperity and Societal Well-Being for All
<i>References:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Doc 9734 — Safety Oversight Manual• Annex 19 — Safety Management• Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP)

1. Introduction

1.1 The harmonization of civil aviation regulations in Central America represents a strategic regional initiative aimed at strengthening safety oversight, improving regulatory consistency, and promoting technical cooperation among States.

1.2 Historically, the region has faced challenges associated with fragmented regulatory frameworks, uneven implementation capacities and duplication of technical efforts among Civil Aviation Authorities. The regional cooperation mechanisms established through the Central American Corporation for Air Navigation Services (COCESNA) and the Central American Aviation Safety Agency (ACSA) have contributed significantly to addressing these challenges; however, the evolution of international requirements and growing operational complexity make the renewal and modernization of these efforts necessary.

1.3 The current effort to modernize and reactivate the regional harmonized regulatory framework represents a timely opportunity to improve regulatory effectiveness, optimize limited technical resources and strengthen the implementation of ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs).

2. Discussion

2.1 Strategic Relevance

2.1.1 From the perspective of the ICAO NACC Regional Office, regulatory harmonization constitutes a strategic mechanism to support States in strengthening the effectiveness of their State safety oversight systems.

2.1.2 A harmonized regulatory environment may contribute to:

- a) reducing duplication of effort in regulatory development;
- b) accelerating the incorporation of ICAO amendments into national regulatory frameworks;
- c) promoting a common interpretation and consistent implementation of technical requirements;
- d) strengthening inspector competencies through shared technical frameworks and collaborative mechanisms;
- e) facilitating technical cooperation and mutual assistance among States; and
- f) improving preparedness for the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme – Continuous Monitoring Approach (USOAP-CMA) activities and other international oversight assessments.

2.1.3 These objectives are consistent with ICAO strategic goals related to safety, implementation support, and regional collaboration.

2.2 Regional Context

2.2.1 The regional harmonization initiative reflects the recognition that many States continue to face limitations related to specialized technical personnel, regulatory maintenance and sustainable implementation capacity.

2.2.2 The modernization of the harmonized regulatory framework is particularly relevant considering:

- the increasing complexity of aircraft operations;
- the need for agile regulatory adaptation;
- the continued implementation of safety management principles;

- performance-based oversight approaches;
- the digital transformation of aviation systems.

2.2.3 Regional collaboration offers an opportunity to address these challenges more efficiently through shared expertise and coordinated implementation mechanisms.

2.3 The Role of ICAO

2.3.1 The ICAO NACC Regional Office sees its role as that of a strategic facilitator and technical partner in support of States and the relevant regional organizations.

2.3.2 Support areas include:

- a) technical guidance regarding alignment with ICAO SARPs;
- b) facilitation of regional coordination discussions;
- c) identification of regulatory gaps and modernization priorities;
- d) exchange of best practices from other ICAO regions;
- e) support for competency development initiatives;
- f) promotion of alignment with regional safety planning objectives; and
- g) direct support to the regulatory harmonization initiative through the designation by the NACC Regional Office of a Regional Officer as the coordination focal point with the ACSA Regional Safety Oversight Organization (RSOO), which has actively participated in the development of the roadmap for the implementation of regulatory harmonization in Central America.

2.3.3 ICAO's support complements the leadership and ownership of the participating States and existing regional mechanisms.

3. Conclusion

3.1 Regional regulatory harmonization represents a strategic opportunity to strengthen States' safety oversight capabilities, optimize technical resources, and promote a more consistent implementation of ICAO SARPs.

3.2 From the perspective of the NACC Regional Office, this initiative constitutes a practical mechanism to strengthen regional cooperation and move towards more efficient, sustainable, and internationally aligned regulatory systems.

3.3 The active participation of the Regional Office in support of this initiative reflects ICAO's continued commitment to strengthening States' capacities and promoting collaborative regional solutions to improve safety.