



Fifteenth Meeting of the Regional Aviation Safety Group – Pan America (RASG-PA/15) and Fifth RASG-PA–GREPECAS Joint Meeting (RASG-PA–GREPECAS/5)
Mexico City, Mexico, 2 to 4 March 2026

Agenda Item 5: Progress on Regional and National Aviation Safety Planning

ESTABLISHMENT OF REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REMOTELY PILOTED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS (RPAS) IN THE MEMBER STATES OF COCESNA

(Presented by COCESNA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, the use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) has experienced significant growth worldwide and, consequently, in the Central American region. Their application ranges from recreational activities to commercial operations, security, and emergency response. However, this growth poses regulatory, operational, and safety challenges that require a coordinated approach at both the regional and international levels.

Action:	<p>ICAO is invited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assign ICAO experts to support Member States in harmonizing regulations, developing training manuals, and preparing RPAS Inspector manuals. 2. Allocate ICAO resources to support the implementation of RPAS-related projects. 3. Provide ICAO support to establish an On-the-Job Training (OJT) programme, including a structured plan that trains personnel directly in the workplace environment, combining theory and practice to ensure the safe, effective, and regulation-compliant use of these systems.
<i>Strategic Goals 2026–2050:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All flights are safe and secure
<i>References</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICAO Model UAS Regulations, Parts 101, 102 and 149 • JARUS OPS A/B • Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/947 • Results of the SWOT analyses (exercises) conducted during the UAS Workshop, 14–17 March 2022

1. Introduction

1.1 In recent years, the use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) has experienced significant growth worldwide and, consequently, in the Central American region. Their application ranges from recreational activities to commercial operations, security, and emergency response. However, this growth poses regulatory, operational, and safety challenges that require a coordinated approach at both the regional and international levels.

2. Challenges

2.1 Lack of regulatory harmonization: Differences in regulations complicate cross-border operations and compliance with international standards.

2.2 Airspace integration: Clear procedures are required to ensure the safe coexistence of UAS and manned aircraft.

2.3 Certification and oversight: There is a need to strengthen the certification and oversight processes for drone operators. (EC 1/5 – 6/8)

2.4 Security risk management: Cybersecurity, privacy, and operational risks associated with UAS must be addressed in an integrated manner.

2.5 Illicit use of UAS: Incidents involving drones used for illegal activities have been identified, which calls for enhanced cooperation among authorities.

3. Development

3.1 COCESNA, through ACSA as the Regional Safety Oversight Organization (RSOO) for the Central American region, has carried out tasks requested by Member States and provides assistance in applying the safety regulatory framework and fulfilling the responsibilities derived from the Chicago Convention and the ICAO Annexes.

3.2 At several high-level meetings during ICAO Assemblies, the benefits that regional cooperation mechanisms can provide for operational safety have been presented and discussed. The deliberations resulted in strengthening RSOOs and using them whenever this can be advantageous for States.

3.3 However, RSOOs still require greater support from ICAO, international organizations and industry, as they play a fundamental role in operational safety by monitoring compliance with standards and regulations, as well as detecting and preventing operational risks. Strengthening and empowering RSOOs is an investment in operational safety, as they provide a number of benefits to Authorities, including:

- Improved operational safety: They play a fundamental role in preventing incidents and accidents.
- Improved operational efficiency: They can help identify and eliminate operational risks, which can lead to improved operational efficiency.
- Avoidance of duplication of tasks: Implementation of measures to avoid duplication of tasks and improve efficiency and reduce costs.
- Harmonization of regional regulations: Leading agreement on common regulations, driven by a variety of factors such as economic integration, regional cooperation, improved efficiency, and facilitation for the regional industry.

3.4 Currently, each Central American country has adopted different approaches to regulate the use of UAS and has implemented regulatory measures to oversee UAS operations. The key aspects of the regulations established by each COCESNA Member State are summarized below:

Belize: Maintains a conservative stance regarding the use of drones, limiting operations to specific commercial activities and prohibiting recreational use. It is essential that any person interested in operating a drone in the country obtains the relevant authorization and complies with all established regulations.

Guatemala: Requires UAS registration and authorization for commercial operations.

El Salvador: Implements specific airspace restrictions for drone operations near airports and critical infrastructure.

Honduras: Requires pilot certification for UAS that exceed a certain weight threshold.

Nicaragua: Has limited regulations, mainly focused on security-related restrictions.

Costa Rica: Developed a comprehensive framework, including pilot training requirements and flight operations guidance.

3.5 While some countries have implemented regulations aligned with ICAO recommendations, differences still exist that may affect safety and the integration of UAS into controlled airspace.

3.6 Proposals and recommendations:

- a) Promote regional regulatory harmonization based on ICAO guidance.
- b) Develop a common UAS register to facilitate the control and traceability of these devices in the region. (SIAREvo)
- c) Implement dedicated UAS air corridors in urban areas and in high-density air traffic areas.
- d) Promote education and awareness programmes on the safe and responsible use of drones.
- e) Strengthen regional cooperation through bilateral and multilateral agreements among civil aviation authorities.

- f) Establish and implement the Regional UAS Standards (Central America Project V2, June 2023) for standardization and harmonization among Member States regarding drones. This standard has been developed with the Central America regional RPAS Group since 2022.

4. Conclusions

4.1 The growth of UAS in Central America represents both an opportunity and a challenge for civil aviation. Effective coordination among States, with the support of COCESNA/ACSA and in alignment with ICAO recommendations, will make it possible to ensure the safety, efficiency, and sustainable development of this technology in the region.