



WORKING PAPER

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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 9: Enhancing Safety/Just Culture

CULTURAL CHANGE STRATEGY

(Presented by Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
A cultural change strategy documented by the State is presented to help state and industrial organizations that are interested in implementing a safety culture.	
Action:	The suggested action is presented in Section 3.
<i>Strategic Goals 2026-2050:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every flight is safe and secure
<i>References:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety Management Manual (Doc 9859) • Compendium on human factors No. 16 - Transcultural factors in aeronautical safety (Circular 302) • Working Paper A41-WP/408 TE/157 – Importance of the cultural change strategy in the implementation of the SSP and SMS

1. Introduction

1.1 As part of the implementation of Safety Management Systems (SMS) and State Safety Programme (SSP), organizations are faced with the task of generating cultural change in the organization during their implementation.

1.2 According to ICAO Circular 302-AN/175, in general terms, culture is understood as a shared system of beliefs (what is true), values (what is important), expectations, and meanings of behaviour (what it implies to take part in a given action) developed by a group over time in order to meet the requirements of living and operating in a (geographical) niche. Likewise, ICAO Document 9859 indicates that safety culture is a part of organizational culture, which could be defined as the way safety is actually carried out within the organization, emphasizing that it refers to the reality of safety and not necessarily to what people say should be done; that is, “how an organization behaves in terms of safety when no one is watching.” In addition, the document outlines a list of characteristics that would shape an “expected positive safety culture.”

1.3 Specifically, a just culture is described as an atmosphere of trust in which people are encouraged (and sometimes rewarded) to provide essential safety-related information, but in which the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour are also clearly defined (James Reason, 1997).

2. Culture Change Strategy

2.1 Although Chapter 3 of Document 9859 provides guidance describing safety culture, its influence on safety reporting, and the actions that will enable or hinder a positive safety culture, it does not explicitly outline a strategy designed to generate a cultural change within the organization—from the initial culture present in the organization to the expected safety culture (with the characteristics indicated in the document).

2.2 The Venezuelan State, as part of its tasks for implementing the SSP and in support of the industry’s SMS, prepared Advisory Circular 05-003 (November 2020): “Guidance for Promoting and Implementing a Positive Safety Culture.” (https://www.inac.gov.ve/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/circular_CA_05_003.pdf)

2.3 In Section 09 of this Circular, a cultural change strategy is presented, summarized in the **Appendix** to note. This information was submitted in Study Note A41-WP/408 TE/157 under Item 30 of the Technical Commission during the 41st session of the ICAO Assembly. The Commission took note of the contents of this study note, which could serve as a basis for measures aimed at addressing the recommendations of the HLCC 2021, and agreed to refer them to the relevant expert groups along with the concerns expressed during the deliberations.

3. Suggested Actions:

3.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) To take into consideration the information presented;

- b) To consider the information prepared in the Circular to assist participants and States in the implementation of a positive safety culture within the framework of the Aviation Safety Action Programmes (ASAP); and
- c) Share this information as part of the best practices and highlight operational and regulatory benefits for both airlines and States.

APPENDIX
CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING CHANGE IN THE SAFETY CULTURE

The following steps and considerations are proposed for organizations seeking to implement a positive safety culture in parallel with the implementation of the SSP or SMS. Accordingly, the following strategy is recommended to be integrated into the SMS/SSP implementation process:

a) Creation of a coordinating team responsible for carrying out the process:

1. Establish a Steering Committee to ensure proper development of the process and secure collective commitment at the highest level. Where a State is implementing its SSP or an organization its SMS, this may be the existing safety committee. Specific responsibilities should be defined according to the size and complexity of the organization.
2. Establish a team responsible for guiding the operational aspects (it is important that all parties involved in the process are represented: management, workers, technical staff, and external consultants, as applicable). This team will be responsible for monitoring the entire cultural change process.

b) Development of a logistical and sequential plan: It must be considered that any organizational culture change is a slow process that requires time for implementation. Therefore, the process should be gradually expanded to the entire organization. If the State is implementing the SSP or an organization its SMS, this plan may be integrated simultaneously into its implementation plan. The following aspects should be considered:

1. Choose the most appropriate moment to avoid parallel events that may interfere with the process. Be assertive.
2. Determine the guidelines to be followed for implementation.
3. Identify the personnel responsible for implementation, as well as all individuals committed to the process and the functions to be carried out. Preferably, these should be clearly recognized leaders.
4. Specify whether external services are needed and their required competencies.
5. Determine the necessary material resources to achieve the final result, the associated costs, and conduct an economic evaluation of the process (implementation cost).
6. Inform workers (before, during, and after) about the entire cultural change process and the degree of participation expected from each member within the organizational system.
7. Establish realistic controls and deadlines to achieve specific objectives at each stage of the process.

- c) **Conduct a diagnosis of the organization’s cultural situation:** Safety culture is subject to many influences, and organizations will require an assessment of their safety culture. Evaluating the maturity level of the safety culture can provide valuable insights that lead to management actions to promote desired safety behaviours. It should be noted that such assessments involve a certain degree of subjectivity and may reflect the opinions and perceptions of those involved at a particular moment. The diagnosis will help identify gaps between the current state and the organization’s expectations in order to determine the cultural change required. To conduct the diagnosis, Doc 9859 provides criteria for shaping the expected safety culture.

- d) **Awareness, dissemination, and “selling/marketing” of the cultural change process:** Select and train potential change agents in key areas. Depending on the size and complexity of the organization, this may include a coordinating team, trained team leaders, and/or “process facilitators” (leaders, motivators for managers and workers in problem-solving). Each facilitator must be capable of generating interest among basic groups to promote participation in the change and help them recognize that change is necessary. To facilitate the process, it is advisable to have change agents in key areas—typically natural leaders, respected and valued professionals who possess the skills and abilities to provide support and act as promoters of solutions and improvements in the workplace.

- e) **Implementation of leadership, teamwork, and problem-analysis/solution-prioritization seminars for managers and supervisors:** Through seminars, all personnel with supervisory responsibilities should become aware of their commitment to team needs. They should act as promoters of change, adopting new management models with leadership skills, participation, and teamwork. In particular, participatory leadership should be developed through training activities such as onboarding programs conducted when new employees join, tailored to their previous experience and professional profile (internal rules, team introduction, explanation of duties, initiation of tasks and job-specific activities).

- f) **Implementation of new/revised safety management techniques and procedures:** Since this is a social instrument to improve the system, priorities will be established regarding key safety management (SMS/SSP) procedures to be implemented, along with a strategy aligned with personal, professional, and organizational development for gradual implementation. For this reason, guidelines must be created to ensure proper design and development, dissemination and accessibility, training, necessary logistical support, and monitoring and control to guarantee activities perceived as reliable, effective, efficient, and optimal in resource management for all teams.

- g) Evaluation and monitoring:** Based on the guidelines mentioned, it is important to always have clear and transparent criteria through the monitoring of actions, working within the classic continuous improvement cycle under the main premise of motivating personnel for the achievements obtained. Since human behaviour is driven by motivation, reward systems should be created to encourage change, focusing on sharing successes achieved in job performance and recognizing and valuing employees' work.
- h) Communication:** For each SSP/SMS implementation activity and cultural change initiative, periodic communication strategies should be developed (as part of the promotion component), informing results and strategies that facilitate communication at all levels of management. Communication channels may include internal bulletins, meetings, emails, digital platforms, improvement team meetings, all-staff meetings, etc.