



INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION

Fifth meeting of the AFI Volcanic Ash Exercises Steering Group**(AFI VOLCEX/SG5)***(Virtual, 9 June 2026)***Agenda Item 5: Proposal of the Lead State for the Fourth AFI Volcanic Ash Exercise****WP5 Proposal of the Lead State for the Fourth AFI Volcanic Ash Exercise***(Presented by the Secretariat)***SUMMARY**

This paper recalls the Lead States of the previous AFI volcanic ash exercises, outlines the importance of designating a Lead State, and call for a volunteer State to lead the fourth AFI volcanic ash exercise. Action by the meeting is in paragraph 3.

REFERENCE(S):

- AASPG1 Report
- AFI VOLCEX 25/01 Exercise Report
- AFI VA Exercises Operational Instructions (VOLCEX OPINS)
- ICAO Doc 9766 - Handbook on the International Airways Volcano Watch (IAVW)
- Terms of Reference of the AFI VOLCEX Steering Group

Related ICAO Strategic Objective(s):

- *A – Every Flight is Safe and Secure*
- *C – Aviation delivers Seamless, Accessible and Reliable Mobility for All*

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The AFI volcanic ash exercises are conducted on a bi-annual basis to test and validate the end-to-end readiness of the regional volcanic ash information chain. Each exercise is conducted under the leadership of a designated Lead State, in coordination with the Volcanic Ash Advisory Centre (VAAC) Toulouse, the AFI Volcanic Ash Exercise Steering Group (AFI VOLCEX/SG) and the ICAO Regional Offices.
- 1.2 The meeting may recall that three AFI volcanic ash exercises have been conducted to date: the first exercise (VOLCEX 21/01) was led by Cabo Verde in November 2021; the second exercise (VOLCEX 23/01) was led by the Democratic Republic of the Congo in December 2023; and the third exercise (VOLCEX 25/01) was led by Kenya on 26 February 2026.
- 1.3 This working paper highlights the importance of designating a Lead State and proposes the Lead State for the fourth AFI volcanic ash exercise.

2. DISCUSSION

Importance of the Lead State

- 2.1 The Lead State plays a central role in the planning, coordination and successful delivery of a volcanic ash exercise. In particular, the Lead State develops the Exercise Directive on the basis of the AFI Volcanic Ash Operational Instructions (OPINS), coordinates the exercise scenario developed by the VAAC Toulouse, mobilizes and sensitizes the participating organizations, hosts the coordination platform, chairs the conduct of the exercise and compiles the final exercise report.
- 2.2 Designating a Lead State well in advance ensures sufficient lead time for adequate preparation, stakeholder engagement and the conduct of the requisite safety risk assessments. Rotating the role among States, and across the Western and Central African (WACAF) and Eastern and Southern African (ESAF) Regions, broadens regional experience, builds institutional capacity and strengthens operational preparedness throughout the AFI Region.

Proposed Lead State for the fourth exercise

- 2.3 Taking into account the rotation of the role to date and the benefit of broadening participation across the AFI Region, the meeting may need to seek for a volunteer State to lead the fourth volcanic ash exercise of the Region, preferably in the WACAF Region, under the Coordination of the Steering Group.

3. ACTIONS BY THE MEETING

- 3.1 The meeting is invited to:
 - note the information contained in this paper;
 - deliberate on paragraph 2.3 of this working paper.

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