



## ASSEMBLY — 40TH SESSION

### TECHNICAL COMMISSION

#### Agenda Item 30 Other issues to be considered by the Technical Commission

### PACIFIC AIRSPACE ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

(Presented by Kiribati)

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper informs the Assembly on PIF SIS Upper Airspace initiatives and policies and the proposed way ahead during coming years.

**Action:** The Assembly is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in this paper;
- b) endorse the plans for a single large block of centrally managed airspace in the Pacific encompassing the airspace overlying the sovereign territories of the PIF SIS; and
- c) discuss any relevant matters as appropriate.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Objectives of greater efficiency in upper airspace management.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	The formulation of the Pacific Upper Airspace will certainly contribute to the improvement of economic benefits to States over whose sovereign territory the airspace lies.
<i>References:</i>	

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is a political grouping of 16 independent and self-governing States. Members include Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Associate members include New Caledonia, Tokelau and French Polynesia. Current Forum Observers include: Wallis and Futuna, the Commonwealth, the United Nations, the Asian Development Bank, Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, the World Bank, the ACP Group, American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas and the International Organization for Migration with Timor Leste as Special Observer.

1.2 The Small Island States (SIS) form part of the PIF.

1.3 Some years ago, the PIF established a policy on management of the Upper Airspace in the central Pacific to provide greater efficiency and to recognise the potential economic benefits for those States over whose sovereign territory the airspace lies. The policy was circulated to all PIF States in 2016 vide Circular 419, which stated:

*“given that earlier studies such as the 1999 Pacific Forum Airspace Management Concept Study, and the 2001 IOS partners report recommended a Regional Air Traffic Service Contractor for Provision of Air Traffic Services by Tender.”*

1.4 The last three annual meetings of the PIF issued a communique each providing, inter alia, reports of the airspace discussions and updates to the PIF and SIS policy. The specific airspace paragraphs of these communiqués have been circulated to Pacific Airspace stakeholders and the full communiqués are available on the PIF website.

1.5 Information on the PIF and SIS discussions and policy concerning airspace in the Pacific was provided to the APANPIRG ATMSG/5 and ATMSG/6 and discussed at APANPIRG/28 and AANPIRG/29, including an informal meeting of Stakeholders attending APANPIRG/28.

1.6 During 2019, the subject has received increased attention within the SIS membership and has been raised at several regional meetings, including the DGCA/55 in Nadi, Fiji in October 2018 during which the ICAO Secretary General was briefed. A mission from Vanuatu to ICAO HQ also raised the matter during their visit in February 2019. A formal briefing note has been circulated within the PIF membership.

## 2. DISCUSSION

### PIF Discussions

2.1 Discussions on rearrangement of the Pacific Upper Airspace have been ongoing since 1993 and possibly earlier. Numerous studies have been conducted and reports issued. With one exception (2003) the reports have recommended some form of reorganisation of the airspace to both achieve greater efficiency in airspace management, consistent with the ICAO policies, as well as recognising the sovereignty claims of ocean States, including Kiribati.

2.2 The matter was presented and raised at the Micronesian Presidents’ Summit held in February 2019 and, since then, it has also been raised at various meetings with development partners who visited Kiribati or those seeking to have bilateral meetings offshore.

2.3 The 2019 meeting of the PIF is planned for September. The meeting will be held in Tuvalu, the most recent State to become and ICAO Contracting State. Discussions on Upper Airspace and the content of this paper to the ICAO Assembly are on the agenda.

2.4 The PIF policy envisages provision of airspace management services by a contractor, overseen by an organisation reporting to the States over whose sovereign territory the airspace lies. This organisation would also be responsible for the payment of the contractor and disbursement of funds from the overflight charges levied.

2.5 It would also be necessary for safety regulatory oversight of the contractor. This must be by a separate organisation as the two roles must be completely separate for reasons of regulatory integrity, ICAO policy and probity.

2.6 As part of the implementation, and certainly well before actual airspace changes can occur, it is necessary that the management oversight organisation be established. After establishment, one of the organisation's first tasks would be the tendering of the airspace management services.

### **ICAO Policy**

2.7 The ICAO policy on establishment of new or fragmenting current Flight Information Regions (FIR) is clearly opposed to creating additional FIRs and any changes in airspace configuration must demonstrate greater efficiency in airspace management and operations.

2.8 The PIF SIS policy, if implemented, will enable this policy of efficiency improvement to be followed. In this respect the Kiribati activities have focused on increasing the awareness of regional neighbours of the PIF policy and attempting to increase international aviation community awareness and support for changes in the existing arrangements in accordance with the PIF SIS policies.

### **Efficiency Proposal**

2.9 The PIF policy envisages establishment of a single large centrally managed block of airspace in the central Pacific employing economies of scale to enable safe and effective management of the airspace by a single agency to reduce the cost to the users of the airspace while maximising the benefits to those States over whose sovereign territory the airspace lies. This is in accordance with both the ICAO and CANSO stated policies for more efficient and cost effective airspace management.

2.10 It is planned that the regulation of the service provider will be a function assigned to the extant Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO).

### **Search and Rescue**

- During the CAAK activities within the international aviation forums the issue of Search and Rescue (SAR) has been raised.
- In normal circumstances, the Search and Rescue Region (SRR) is coincident with the Flight Information Region and the responsibility for SAR lies with the State responsible for the FIR/SRR.
- Under the proposed PIF SIS Upper Airspace arrangements it will be necessary to address the issue of SRR and associated SAR responsibilities.

### **Wider Application**

- During discussions with other States and international aviation organisations the issue of application of the proposed arrangements outside the SIS has been raised. This is particularly relevant to the initial concerns expressed by Airport Fiji Limited (AFL) in relation to segregation of the northern sectors of the Nadi FIR.
- As the ICAO policy suggests, in general terms the larger the block of airspace the greater efficiency in providing services due to economies of scale. This is also at the foundation of the PIF SIS Upper airspace policy: smaller States would have difficulty in funding the infrastructure necessary to provide discrete air traffic management services in the airspace overlying their territory.

### **Future Activities**

2.11 The way ahead is planned by stages as follows:

- Establish an airspace management agency consisting of representatives of the various SIS. The purpose of the agency is to prepare and submit the airspace change proposals to ICAO APAC RO in accordance with the extant procedures.
- The agency would then be charged with management of the change process and implementation, including conducting an international tender to select an appropriate ANSP to provide the ATS services.

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