



WORKING PAPER

ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION

TECHNICAL COMMISSION

Agenda Item 30: Aviation Safety and Air Navigation Policy

Agenda Item 30.3: Relevant Outcomes of the High-level Conference on COVID-19, Safety Stream (HLCC 2021)

REMOTE SURVEILLANCE AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS DURING THE PANDEMIC

(Presented by Bangladesh)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Traditional safety oversight audits and inspections are not possible during times of public health emergencies (a pandemic). Safety oversight activities by States have significantly been affected by the impact of COVID19 due to movement control and border measures. Due to the imposition of public health restrictions, regular on-site audit/inspection are not possible and has to be carried out virtually by both the regulator and the service providers under the State's Safety Oversight Obligations.

Therefore, despite a pandemic situation, States have to continue with their surveillance with hybrid/remote delivery options in addition to the onsite activities. A provision of such a Guidance Material from ICAO for remote surveillance would allow the States in adopting unified processes for such activities in such situations.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) urge ICAO, States and industry to collectively work on the development of a framework to guide the States for use of remote surveillance; and
- b) encourage States to assist one another in safety oversight through the exchange of relevant information obtained from their safety oversight activities to ensure prompt attention to risk mitigation in support of safe recovery.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to the Safety, Security and Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency Strategic Objectives.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	Not Applicable
<i>References:</i>	Doc 10160, <i>Report of the High-Level Conference on COVID-19 (Montréal, 12 to 22 October 2021). Report</i> Doc 9859, <i>Safety Management Manual</i> Doc 9734, <i>Safety Oversight Manual, Part A — The Establishment and Management of a State Safety Oversight System</i> Doc 8335, <i>Manual of Procedures for Operations Inspection, Certification and Continued Surveillance</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Until sufficient portions of the population have been vaccinated, movement control and border measures are likely to remain. The world had been severely impacted by the COVID-19 since December 2019. Even as the COVID-19 situation transitions to an endemic stage, whereby more social and economic activities would resume, restrictions may be implemented or retained. COVID-19 pandemic has hampered the deployment of inspectors to conduct safety oversight activities both locally and overseas.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The COVID-19 pandemic caused a drop in airline activities by 60 per cent in 2020. Air travel and tourism are not expected to return to 2019 levels until 2024. Despite a pandemic situation, safety oversight activities must continue and be carried out effectively at the national level. COVID-19 provides the impetus for regulators and organizations to adopt new ways of working and collaboration. Some States have adapted their safety oversight approaches through the conduct of remote surveillance.

2.2 Remote Surveillance

2.2.1 Many States have already practiced a comprehensive remote safety audit/surveillance during the pandemic. Typically, remote/virtual safety audits/inspections consist of three main components:

- a) regulations/special procedures;
- b) digital audit for review of documents; and
- c) virtual inspection.

This virtual surveillance during the pandemic was very useful in restoring the public's confidence in traveling again.

2.2.2 For easy compliance by the service providers, the applicable regulations need to be augmented. The augmented requirements could include making amendments to the regulations or developing a revised compliance checklist. On the day of the virtual audit/inspection, the regulator and service provider can have a video conference to clarify the scope of the audit.

2.2.3 COVID-19 has introduced greater momentum to the use of remote surveillance (audits and inspections). Virtual surveillance can be cost-effective and productive by reducing travel and the associated administrative work. It allows regulators to reallocate resources and thus provide time to focus on core regulatory activities. It is most likely that remote surveillance will remain an attractive option for States far beyond the COVID-19 endemic.

2.2.4 Remote/virtual means of safety inspections and auditing are increasingly important, but they cannot replace onsite inspections and audits. Ground observation performed during on-site audits and inspections provide valuable insight into the safety commitment and culture of organizations and teams. These inputs are harder to gather through remote on-screen engagement.

2.2.5 Given the potential for remote surveillance to be used more widely ICAO, States and the industry might collaborate to develop a framework or set of guidelines for remote surveillance. The framework would assist State decision-making on the use of virtual surveillance and permit standardization in remote methods and technological specifications. Furthermore, the efficacy of the oversight should be the primary factor in determining how to use virtual means.

2.3 International Collaboration and Information Sharing

2.3.1 Through facilitating the surveillance of overseas approval holders, the COVID-19 situation has presented an opportunity for the States to collaborate and assist one another in their safety oversight activities. Where necessary, the facilitation of onsite audits of organizations located overseas would be useful.

2.3.2 To facilitate the exchange of relevant safety information derived from their onsite safety oversight activity, States may nevertheless agree to bilateral arrangements. Typically, onsite audits often collect a wider range of information, including observations made while physically inspecting a facility, paper records that could not be converted to digital format, and ad-hoc interviews with staff that may not be possible through virtual means.

2.3.3 Therefore, the information generated from onsite audits could supplement data collected via virtual surveillance. This information could be shared with the other States to ensure prompt attention to risk mitigation in support of safe recovery

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 As per the State's safety oversight obligations, the regulator is required to conduct routine audits and inspections virtually on a regular basis due to the imposition of public health restrictions. Therefore, in addition to the onsite activities, States have to continue with their safety surveillance with hybrid/remote delivery options even in the event of a pandemic.