



**WORKING PAPER**

**ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION**

**TECHNICAL COMMISSION**

**Agenda Item 33: Other issues to be considered by the Technical Commission**

**CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING THE FIR DESCRIPTION IN THE ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION**

(Presented by Bangladesh)

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This paper presents a brief overview of the difficulties faced by member States to describe the flight information region (FIR) of the States within the Asia and Pacific (APAC) Region with data accuracy. The FIR description with data accuracy had been a significant challenge for the States in particular and for the international aviation community in general.

The issue of updating the APAC Air Navigation Plan (ANP) and the capability of the States to provide the accurate data on their FIR were discussed over the last few years, in some ICAO regional meetings. However, significant progress on the issue is yet to be achieved.

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

- a) note the status of the FIR description of member States within APAC Region;
- b) encourage Member States/Administrations to support the initiatives taken by the regional office for updating the FIR/search and rescue region (SRR) Table in the APAC Air Navigation Plan (ANP);
- c) request Member States of the APAC Region to review the data affecting their administrations and provide feedback to ICAO on the data's accuracy;
- d) encourage Member States/Administrations to demonstrate their government/regulatory entities for taking steps to meet ICAO directives;
- e) urge Member States/Administrations to improve the coordination and cooperation between neighbouring State(s) to resolve the FIR issue and engage in negotiations to accelerate the process in order to establish a uniform platform.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to all Strategic Objectives.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	No additional resources required.
<i>References:</i>	Doc 10140, <i>Assembly Resolutions in Force (as of 4 October 2019)</i> APAC Air Navigation Plan VOL-I <sup>1</sup> Relevant ICAO APAC meetings

<sup>1</sup> [APAC AIR NAVIGATION PLAN \(ANP\) \(icao.int\)](https://www.icao.int)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Continuous and persuasive initiatives have been undertaken by ICAO, especially through the Regional Office to replace the former *Asia and Pacific Regions Air Navigation Plan* (Doc 9673) with *APAC Air Navigation Plan (ANP)* as well as *electronic Air Navigation Plan (eANP)*. ICAO has always urged the Member States to give emphasis on flight information region (FIR) description with data accuracy.

1.2 It is already noted by all member States that the previous Doc 9673 did not provide a legal description for FIRs. FIR descriptions can be found in ATM I-1 Table of eANP Vol-I, where the FIR's name is being captured. Presently, there are approximately 19 FIRs out of 49, as contained in Table ATM I-1, for which the FIR description reflected as "to be incorporated". Hence, those member States should adopt FIR review exercises with an aim to include the accurate lateral limits coordinates/dimensions of their FIR. In most of the cases, the State's data is not consistent with historical regional air navigation (RAN)/proposals for amendment (PfA) data, or not consistent with adjacent boundary data.

1.3 Amending a State's FIR data is a complicated and time-consuming process, which requires the approval of President of the ICAO Council. It may be mentioned here that State cannot change the FIR data without submitting the PfA. State must ensure that the data presented in the PfA are accurate, as well as consistent with the FIR data of neighbouring State(s). If there is no consensus from the adjacent State(s), when ICAO circulates the PfA, there could be objections from the affected States. For this type of cases, bilateral agreements may be one of the tools to expedite the process before submitting the PfA to concerned ICAO Region.

1.4 It is sometimes difficult for States to resolve the FIR inconsistency or boundary revision issue(s) through bilateral/trilateral meeting(s) with the concerned neighbouring States. The State has to commit to national interest or government plan and strategy. In most of the cases, it becomes complicated when more than two States are involved in this process. Even if one neighbouring State agrees to the FIR amendment proposal of a particular State, it will not be resolved until the other neighbouring State agrees, which prolongs the process of incorporating the FIR data in ANP for all involving States.

1.5 It has been raised in various relevant APAC meetings that to get an approval for FIR amendment(s), some States submitted PfA considering that the FIR description of the neighbouring States is consistent as published in concerned Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP). States should recognise and follow the ICAO's recommendation that the AIP is not the definitive source of FIR data.

## 2. INITIATIVES NEED TO BE CONSIDERED

2.1 A review of the FIRs needs to be conducted by concerning Member States taking into consideration the sovereignty, air navigation charges and the establishment of special use airspace (SUA). It is important for States to understand that the process of checking, alignment, and validation of FIRs for data accuracy is a crucial task.

2.2 For FIR amendment, the concerned State may achieve consensus from the adjacent States through bilateral or trilateral negotiation and may submit PfA jointly to the ICAO regional office. This process may reduce the workload of the regional office. It is expected that the Administrations/Member States would demonstrate their government's willingness to accelerate the process of resolving FIR

issue(s) with neighbouring State(s) with due regard to ICAO's initiatives for updating the FIR/SRR Table in APAC ANP.

2.3 A further request to Member States to support and give due importance to ICAO's initiatives for updating the FIR/SRR Table in APAC Air Navigation Plan (ANP).

2.4 The Council may provide an outline or develop mechanisms to resolve the FIR issues which are yet to be incorporated in the APAC ANP. To conduct this challenging task, the Assembly is requested to note some of the following areas affecting the FIR data resolving process:

- a) States usually give emphasis with a political dimension;
- b) hinder progress due to the possible matters of 'sovereignty' and 'national interest' instead of service provision;
- c) the regional office requires more clarifications/justifications with adjacent States while submitting any change on FIR data; and
- d) for FIR amendment, a few Member States may possess a concept that publication of FIR data in the State's AIP is a solution.

2.5 To identify the potential solution of this task ICAO is also requested to step up efforts to work with the APAC States.

### 3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The issue of the FIR versus sovereign airspace will not be an easy task to resolve. Geopolitics, regional sensitivities, and international trade are linked in a complex web of challenges, whose mismanagement can potentially have serious implications to aviation safety issues. While ICAO is doing its best to update the ANP, it is also equally important for the States to come forward and work closer for a unified effort to uphold the ICAO recommendations. This working paper represents the views of a State in outlining this importance while looks forward to the positive initiative by concerned Member States.

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