



**WORKING PAPER**

**ASSEMBLY – 41ST SESSION**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Agenda Item 28: Other high-level policy issues to be considered by the Executive Committee**

**ENDORISING GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND INDUSTRY INITIATIVES INTENDED TO  
MITIGATE CONFLICT ZONES RISKS FOR CIVIL AVIATION**

(Presented by Canada and co-sponsored by Australia, Jordan, Kenya, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, United States of America and by the European Union and its Member States<sup>1</sup>, the other Member States of the European Civil Aviation Conference<sup>2</sup>, Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation, European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation, International Air Transport Association, International Federation of Air Line Pilots)

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In response to the 2014 downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 (MH17), ICAO mobilized the international community to address the risks posed to civil aviation from conflict zones (CZ). As part of this work, the “Risk Assessment Manual for Civil Aircraft Operations Over or Near Conflict Zones” (Doc 10084) was developed and published in 2018. Following the 2020 downing of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 (PS752), the ICAO Council endorsed the “Safer Skies Initiative” and established a renewed work programme related to CZ risk.

In parallel to these efforts, several global and regional initiatives were established to enhance effective airspace risk management. International groups and organisations driving this important work include European institutions, such as the European Union (EU) and its Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), the Expert Group on Risk Information overflying Conflict Zones (EGRICZ), the Safer Skies Consultative Committee (SSCC) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA). While significant advancements have been made since 2014, considerable work remains to further improve the safety and security of civil aviation operations over or near CZ.

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

- a) note the significant progress made to advance the work of conflict zone risk mitigation conducted by the SSCC, EGRICZ and the EU to enable States and operators, where appropriate, to consolidate their risk assessment and mitigation measures, namely:
  1. the SSCC Risk Mitigation Inventory;
  2. the SSCC Guidance Material for the application of the Precautionary Principle
  3. the SSCC Guiding Principles for Airspace Closure;

<sup>1</sup> Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

<sup>2</sup> Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine and United Kingdom.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. the SSCC/EGRICZ: Guiding Principles for Reassessing Post Conflict Airspace;</li> <li>5. the SSCC/EGRICZ Guidelines for Baseline and Rapid Information Sharing;</li> <li>6. the EGRICZ Guidelines for Harmonization of Risk Communications; and,</li> <li>7. the Integrated EU Aviation Security Risk Assessment approach.</li> </ol> <p>b) request the Secretary General to prioritize the review of Doc 10084, <i>Risk Assessment Manual for Civil Aircraft Operations Over or Near Conflict Zones</i> by building on results achieved through the above-mentioned initiatives;</p> <p>c) encourage States and Organisations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. to take note of existing information sharing initiatives as efficient tools for the civil aviation community to rapidly share emerging CZ threat related information; and</li> <li>2. when conducting oversight, consult the global information-sharing platforms, or similar regional initiatives, if implemented</li> </ol>	
<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to the Safety and Security and Facilitation Strategic Objectives.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	None for Contracting States.
<i>References:</i>	Doc 10088, <i>Manual on Civil-Military Cooperation in Air Traffic Management</i> Doc 10084, <i>Risk Assessment Manual for Civil Aircraft Operations Over or Near Conflict Zones</i> Annex 17, <i>Security</i> Annex 6, <i>Operation of Aircraft</i> , Part I – International Commercial Air Transport - Aeroplanes

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 8 January 2020, flight PS752 was shot down over Iran, six years after the similar downing of flight MH17 over Ukraine. These tragedies remind the global community that work remains to properly mitigate the risks posed to civil aviation operations by CZ.

1.2 These events also highlighted shortcomings in

- a) the availability of CZ information;
- b) the implementation of risk mitigation actions; and
- c) air operators conducting risk assessments and implementing risk mitigations, where required.<sup>3</sup>

1.3 Several key initiatives exist to address the above-mentioned shortcomings, both at international and regional levels. This working paper highlights those efforts and invites the Assembly to request the Secretary General to prioritize the review of the second edition of Doc 10084, noting that the work could be facilitated by building on the results achieved by these initiatives to better mitigate CZ risks.

<sup>3</sup> As per Annex 6, *Operation of Aircraft*, Part I

## 2. DISCUSSION

2.1 In line with the provisions of Annex 17, *Security*, States are required to keep under constant review the level and nature of threat to civil aviation within their territory and the airspace above it and adjust their security programmes accordingly based upon a security risk assessment.<sup>4</sup>

2.2 Given a State's exclusive sovereignty of airspace over its territory, overflights can only be conducted in accordance with authorisation given by the State concerned. In addition, States may restrict the use of airspace over their sovereign territory, for reasons of military necessity or public safety. However, as demonstrated by the study from the Flight Safety Foundation, from 1985 to 2020, only 1 out of 57 incidents affecting the safety of civil aviation occurred in previously closed airspace.<sup>5</sup>

2.3 In accordance with the provisions of Annex 6, *Operation of Aircraft*, an operator must ensure that a flight does not commence unless it has been ascertained that the route can be safely used.<sup>6</sup> This standard also emphasises that a risk assessment must be conducted when air operators intend to operate over or near CZ, and that appropriate risk mitigation measures must be implemented.

2.4 To conduct a comprehensive risk assessment, air operators should consider open-source information and intelligence specific to civil aviation from a variety of vetted sources, including restrictions and advisories issued by their own national authorities and by the States along the flight routing.

2.5 Improving collaboration among States, industry and international organizations can provide more consistent, two-way information sharing, and allow stakeholders to conduct well-informed risk assessments and make informed decisions about whether to fly over or near a specific CZ. The global and regional initiatives listed below are a key component of this effort.

### GLOBAL AND INDUSTRY INITIATIVES

2.6 Shortly after the downing of flight PS752, Canada launched the [Safer Skies Initiative](#) to enhance the level of safety and security for commercial aircraft travelling over or near CZ. The SSCC is part of this initiative and brings together subject-matter experts from States, international organizations, and industry, providing a formal international platform to consolidate discussions on CZ in relation to civil aviation.

2.7 The SSCC's recent work focused on strengthening baseline and rapid information sharing practices within the civil aviation community, creating a Mitigation Strategy Inventory, developing Guiding Principles Related to Airspace Closure and exploring the precautionary principle.<sup>7</sup> The SSCC has also worked closely with the EGRICZ to advance work on information sharing and harmonizing airspace notification language.

2.8 The SSCC established the Safer Skies Forum, an annual, global event bringing together expert partners from States, international organizations, and the civil aviation industry to:

- a) share best practices regarding CZ risk mitigation;

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<sup>4</sup> Annex 17, *Security*, Amendment 18, Standards 2.4.4, 3.1.3 and 3.1.5

<sup>5</sup> Study of hostile events and State practices in regards to the use by civil aviation of airspace over CZ, Flight Safety Foundation (2020).

<sup>6</sup> Annex 6, *Operation of Aircraft*, Part I: Flight Operations, Standard 4.1.2, applicable since 5 November 2020.

<sup>7</sup> The *precautionary principle* aims to give more weight to uncertain but catastrophic scenarios to ensure the safety of the aircraft, crew and passengers in the context of assessing conflict zones risks and identifying appropriate mitigation measures. Instead of the likelihood, the impact of the risk should be a leading consideration to ensure a higher level of protection through preventative decision-taking.

- b) enable information sharing and a broader dialogue between parties on current issues and way-forward; and,
- c) advocate for the implementation of ICAO SARPs related to CZ overflight risk mitigation. The second Safer Skies Forum was co-hosted by Canada and the SSCC on 29-30 March, 2022.

2.9 Finally, the SSCC noted the IATA Tactical Operations Portal (ITOP), a platform that rapidly provides security and alerting information to subscribers. It is a web-based subscription tool with over 1900 members managed by IATA Liaison Desk personnel and Regional experts. It provides subscribers with real time alerts related to airports, flight information regions, security or threat risks, and provides the capability to collaborate via a chat function on items that impact airline operations on a global scale. Originally, ITOP provided information on same-day air traffic constraints and disruptions primarily to the Americas region, but it was determined that members would benefit from the expansion of this capability.

## **REGIONAL INITIATIVES**

2.10 The Integrated EU Aviation Security Risk Assessment Group regularly leads common risk assessments, which enables the exchange of information between EU Member States, services and agencies as well as European air operators and airline associations. In early 2016, the EU developed the “EU CZ Alerting System” (the System) to achieve more consistency in the advice offered to airlines. The System joins up available information and intelligence with CZ risk assessment capabilities, to enable the timely publication of information and recommendations on CZ risks. It also provides a common European risk picture/corresponding recommendations and is referenced as a best practice in Doc 10084. The outcomes of the System support the decision-making process on mitigation measures as well as the issuance of EASA CZ Information Bulletins and Information Notes.

2.11 In addition, EASA launched a European Information Sharing and Cooperation Platform on Conflict Zones (the Platform) to support the System. The Platform assists, where appropriate, institutions and air operators share information, conduct risk assessments and quickly implement appropriate mitigation measures to ensure safety and security of flight. Membership is open to eligible EU institutions, EASA Member States, as well their national commercial air carriers.

2.12 Risk mitigation measures at the EU level are implemented by the following actions:

- a) the publication of Information Notes on the European Information Sharing and Cooperation Platform on Conflicts, dissemination of information on CZ, armed insurgencies, risks and recommendations addressed to Member State representatives;
- b) the publication of Conflict Zone Information Bulletins (CZIBs), which may contain operational recommendations, for countries that were deemed to have a “high” risk level as a result of the EU risk assessment, or in other cases where there is a need to make other information public; and
- c) the publication of Conflict Zones, including more detailed information on specific risk areas and recommendations distributed on a need-to-know basis to Member States and members of the Platform.

2.13 Another example of information sharing comes from the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration, which expanded its international engagement by facilitating shared awareness between States and airlines, via the distribution of unclassified Information Notes to all aviation stakeholders. These notes provide a common understanding of risk concerns and inform and support the development of appropriate mitigation measures.

### 3. CONCLUSION

3.1 Properly mitigating the risks CZ pose to civil aviation operations and making our skies safer requires global collaboration. The initiatives presented in this working paper directly contribute to this goal; however, they require global commitment to be effective. By prioritizing the review of Doc 10084, *Risk Assessment Manual for Civil Aircraft Operations Over or Near Conflict Zones* encouraging States and Organisations to participate in regional and global information-sharing initiatives, ICAO can provide the necessary leadership to ensure that the global civil aviation community proactively builds on the progress made in the area of CZ risk mitigation. As such, the Assembly is invited to endorse the Actions as stated in the executive summary.

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