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ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION

TECHNICAL COMMISSION

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

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND QUALIFICATION OF SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR) PERSONNEL

(Presented by Cameroon)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) recommend that watchstanders at Rescue Coordination Centres (RCCs) and Rescue Sub-Centres (RSCs) be subject to qualification and certification requirements in view of their particularly important duties. Similarly, Annex 12 recommends that RCC personnel involved in radiotelephony communications be proficient in the use of the English language, while the IAMSAR Manual notes that SAR crews need training.

ICAO's published guidance on SAR personnel qualification often does not provide sufficient detail to establish a minimum level of competence necessary to support effective air search operations worldwide.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Objectives of Safety and Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	The activities described in this working paper will continue to depend on the availability of resources under the Regular Programme Budget for 2023-2025 and/or extra-budgetary contributions.
<i>References:</i>	Annex 12 — <i>Search and Rescue</i> Doc 9731, <i>International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual</i> Doc 9906, <i>The Quality Assurance Manual for Flight Procedure Design</i>

¹ French version provided by Cameroon.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 As provided in Article 25 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, each ICAO Member State has an obligation to assist aircraft in distress in its territory by providing prompt and effective search and rescue (SAR) services. This requires that adequate facilities, equipment and trained personnel be available on a 24-hour basis.

1.2 Such personnel include, but are not limited to, SAR Coordinators (SC), SAR Mission Coordinators (SMC), and Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC) and Rescue Sub-Centre (RSC) personnel, On-Scene Coordinators (OSC), Aircraft Coordinators (ACO) and Search and Rescue Unit (SRU) personnel.

1.3 Section 3.1.8 of the *International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual (Doc 9731), Volume 1 — Organization and Management*, requires that RCC and RSC personnel be qualified and certified to carry out their duties, with an emphasis on SAR incident analysis, search planning and SAR operation management.

1.4 Paragraph 2.3.3 of Annex 12 — *Search and Rescue* requires that RCC and RSC personnel be proficient in the use of the language used in radiotelephony communications, while paragraph 2.3.4 recommends that RCC and RSC personnel, when participating in radiotelephony communications, be proficient in the use of the English language.

2. ANALYSIS

2.1 Qualification and Certification of SMCs

2.2 The purpose of qualification of an SMC is to validate the ability of the individual to perform certain functions, while certification enables the individual to perform watchkeeping functions.

2.3 During this process, a working knowledge of the English language is essential for SMCs to be able to communicate with Mission Control Centres (MCCs), other RCCs/RSCs, air traffic services organizations, as well as with ship captains and aircraft commanders.

2.4 However, there is no ICAO guidance on the qualification and certification process for personnel serving in RCCs/RSCs and no clear indication of the minimum level of English language proficiency that they should achieve.

2.5 In this context, Cameroon has developed a test called “SAR Personnel English Language Proficiency Test” to assess the English language proficiency of personnel performing SMC functions in an RCC or RSC. The framework is based on the determination of the English language proficiency level commensurate with the functions performed in a centre. A working paper presented under this agenda item provides more information on the SMC language proficiency assessment system in place in Cameroon.

2.6 Air SAR Crew Training

2.7 Air SAR crews include pilots, navigators, observers, airdrop specialists, etc. Air SAR assets play a critical role and SAR crews are often responsible for conducting air search operations in difficult environments and conditions, including mountains, forests, seas and deserts.

2.8 It is therefore important that these crews be trained in specific search and rescue methods and techniques, and in conducting SAR operations under optimal safety conditions.

2.9 Although Doc 9731, Volume 3 — *Mobile Facilities* of contains some elements to be considered for their training, there is not sufficient guidance for States to develop a detailed training programme for SAR crews. In particular, for SAR aircrews, there is no minimum competency framework for their qualification, as proposed in *The Quality Assurance Manual for Flight Procedure Design* (Doc 9906) Volume 6, for flight procedure validation pilots.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The availability of guidance on the SMC qualification process could contribute to the achievement of a minimum level of competency for personnel serving in RCCs and RSCs. Similarly, the availability of a competency framework for the qualification of SAR crews would contribute to the effective training of these crews for more effective air search operations.

3.2 The Assembly is invited to:

- a) take note of the contents of this working paper;
- b) note the actions taken by Cameroon to put in place an English language proficiency framework for SAR Mission Coordinators (SMC); and
- c) request the ICAO Secretariat to develop guidance on the qualification of SMCs, their English language skills, and the training programme for SAR crews.

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