



**WORKING PAPER**

**ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION**

**TECHNICAL COMMISSION**

**Agenda Item 31: Aviation Safety and Air Navigation Standardization**

**PREVENTIVE HEALTH PROGRAMMES FOR AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS**

(Presented by the Dominican Republic)

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This working paper puts forward a proposal for the development of preventive health programmes to reduce health problems associated with air traffic control services in younger ATCs and thereby enhance their productivity and well-being.

**Action:** The Assembly is invited to urge States to implement preventive health programmes for ATC personnel to:

- a) increase productivity of air traffic controllers;
- b) maintain high levels of ANSP efficiency by having healthier air traffic controllers;
- c) reduce organizational costs associated with health insurance and related issues; and
- d) enable organizations to accommodate suggested times and ages for retirements and other staffing requirements.

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| <i>Strategic Objectives:</i>   | This working paper relates to the Strategic Objectives of Safety and Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency   |
| <i>Financial implications:</i> |   |
| <i>References:</i>             | Doc 9426, ICAO <i>Air Traffic Services Planning Manual</i> , 1st Edition, 1984<br>Doc 9859, ICAO <i>Safety Management Manual (SMM)</i> , 4th Edition, 2018. |

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The conditions associated with the overall health of individuals, especially the health of air traffic controllers, are critical to the development and progress of all air navigation services providers. There is a direct relationship between the two elements, and both elements are fundamental to the achievement of the strategic objective of safety by ICAO Member States.

1.2 Considering that we have witnessed a considerable deterioration or impairment of the health of air traffic controllers in many countries, and a reduction in their work-life expectancy, especially after COVID-19, the pattern or existing relationship with respect to the overall health of ATCs

<sup>1</sup> Spanish version provided by the Dominican Republic.

must be considered as an essential factor when managing complex structured systems such as those of international civil aviation, and when developing programmes and proposals focused on the prevention and treatment of health-related issues.

## 2. ANALYSIS

2.1 A relevant factor in the negative effects on the health of air traffic controllers is ageing and job-related health conditions. As it is well known, ageing is a natural process that is determined by several aspects and changes not only in the physical sphere, but also relating to the stimuli of the very environment of air navigation systems. For this reason, as the air traffic control service evolves and becomes a more and more complex and dynamic system, the factors related to its human resources become more and more critical and essential.

2.2 However, despite the consequences of ageing on cognitive performance, changes in the provision of air traffic control services and the impact of diseases and disorders derived from COVID-19, diseases such as cancer, hypertension, diabetes, psychiatric illness, among others, are more frequent in younger populations of air traffic controllers. It is for this reason that concerns are being raised about these health factors affecting air traffic controllers in many countries and the possible impact they could have on the operation, efficiency and development of air navigation systems.

2.3 As stated in the Air Traffic Services Planning Manual, “As for any other form of transportation, there is an inherent need to provide certain services to air traffic so that it can be conducted in a safe and orderly manner”. This is why the timely and relevant availability of air traffic control services is essential and necessary for air transport activities.

2.4 The word “services” means that, to the maximum extent possible, the ATS should be available to users and that any action taken by the ATS which is likely to hinder the intention of any of its users, can only be justified if the results of improved services benefit the majority of users. Based on this premise, it is imperative that the causal factors of the detriment to the health of traffic controllers in younger populations be evaluated in a timely manner, and above all, that prevention and mitigation programmes be developed in this regard.

2.5 This notion is also considered in Doc 9859, *Safety Management Manual*, which states that: “Managing safety needs to address how people contribute, both positively and negatively, to organizational safety. Human factors is about: understanding the ways in which people interact with the world, their capabilities and limitations, and influencing human activity to improve the way people do their work. As a result, the consideration of human factors is an integral part of safety management, necessary to understand, identify and mitigate risks as well as to optimize the human contributions to organizational safety”.

2.6 Each air navigation system is called upon to consider these variables with respect to the overall health of its air traffic controllers and how younger populations are experiencing negative impacts on their health.

2.7 It is essential to maintain a positive relationship and balance for aviation personnel with respect to such issues as physical and mental health, good working conditions, efficiency, quality of life, and the development and sustainability of efficient air traffic services.