



WORKING PAPER

ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION

TECHNICAL COMMISSION

Agenda Item 32: Aviation Safety and Air Navigation Regional Implementation Coordination Mechanisms

BIOSAFETY PROCEDURES FOR AIRPORT PROTOCOLS

(Presented by Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, Member States of the Central American Corporation for Air Navigation Services (COCESNA))

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This working paper sets out the components of the Biosafety Protocols established in the Central American Region for the gradual and harmonized revival of air transport, following the closing down of aeronautical operations caused by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to provide support to the region for the safe revival and recovery of aviation following the downturn in operations. The various actions that continue to be taken in the Central American States have been crucial to ensuring continuity in the resumption of operations.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) request ICAO support for the establishment of Acceptable Levels of Biosafety Performance (Bio-ALOSP) in States, so as to enable regulators to monitor the effectiveness of biosafety procedures; and
- b) take note of experience in the Central American Region and share the data produced and the source thereof in order to encourage other States to establish Bio-ALOSP and ensure the recovery and continuity of worldwide operations through the establishment and implementation of a measurement system, using biosecurity statistical indicators to evaluate the results, identify the weakest barriers and thus establish a risk management-based surveillance system

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to the Strategic Objective of Safety.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	None
<i>References:</i>	Annex 14 – <i>Aerodromes</i> Annex 11 – <i>Air Traffic Services</i> Annex 9 – <i>Facilitation</i> Annex 6 – <i>Operation of Aircraft</i> Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) Take-off: Guidance for Air Travel through the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis, Fourth Edition, 2021

¹ Spanish version provided by COCESNA.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The impact on civil aviation of the effects of infectious/contagious diseases such as COVID-19 gave rise to risks beyond the acceptable ranges of probability and severity. It is therefore important that measures not envisaged before the pandemic should now be included in the standard operating procedures of the air transport system.

1.2 The biosafety protocols established in the Region for the gradual and harmonized revitalization of air transport are guides for the implementation of the “Gradual and harmonized recovery plan for air transport in the Region”, which represents a committed effort by the Central American Corporation for Air Navigation Services (COCESNA).

1.3 The “Gradual and harmonized recovery plan for air transport in the Region” contains general guidelines on the revival of safe and efficient air transport operations, grouped into five component categories:

COMPONENT 1: Preparatory phase

COMPONENT 2: Operational suitability

COMPONENT 3: Implementation of the Biosafety Protocol

COMPONENT 4: Fostering user confidence

COMPONENT 5: Measurement system

1.4 Over and above the measures provided for in the biosafety protocols devised for international and domestic airports, it is necessary to establish procedures for every part of the passenger process in the airport terminal. Furthermore, it should be noted that the lines of action established in public health protocols, which involve barriers (defences) to mitigate contagion within the system, provide for desirable measures in respect of possible case detection, barriers involving the use of personal protective equipment, barriers to ensure distancing, technological systems of personal isolation for employees in the process and regulatory elements (rules) binding on staff and passengers. However, these barriers represent “What should be done?” measures but do not inherently constitute procedures entailing secondary containment and mitigation measures determining the components needed for their implementation; in other words, they do not answer the questions of who, how, when, or with whom. The necessary coordination is conducted before or during a specific event.

1.5 The lack of specific procedures for each part of the process is an inherent weakness in the system since, by not being included in the emergency manual, it creates a vacuum in the lines of action established in the protocols.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The Biosafety Protocol, together with the generic procedures developed as templates, provide a detailed list of recommendations and implementation measures based on the report drafted by the Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the State and individual airport facilitation committees, including Take-off: Guidance for Air Travel through the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis. It also considers the robust risk analyses performed

by the COCESNA technical team and the particular circumstances of Member States, using the “bow tie analysis” methodology, whereby in addition to the establishment of barriers, scaling factors are analysed and tasks with specific managers are established.

2.2 The document reflects the joint efforts of the air transport and airport industry to identify a road map for resuming, recovering and maintaining operations, based on a long-standing commitment to safety as the highest priority. Success depends on an association and collaborative approach involving key stakeholders in the travel chain, including the authorities.

2.3 The guidance procedures drawn up by the technical staff of COCESNA-ACSA are geared to implementation with acceptable levels of biosafety, for which reason the States in the region are urged as far as possible to adopt the procedures and implement them in such a way as to facilitate creation of a regional health corridor serving to show other regions that the region’s airports have a secure access portal, as well as not only to restart operations but to successfully recover passenger traffic by maintaining these visible and tangible measures in the airport system of the NAM/CAR Region.

3. DEVELOPMENTS

3.1 At this date, all airports have biosafety protocols against COVID-19 in place, which are implemented using recognized mitigation measures. The “Plan for gradual and harmonized recovery of air transport in the Region” has borne fruit inasmuch as the statistics at this date show a 95 per cent increase in operations compared with the same months of 2019. If the system is to be sustainable, however, the biosafety protocols need to provide for continuous implementation procedures.

3.2 The package of procedures that has been developed includes the “PVC-011 – Procedure for the measurement of biosafety protocol reliability” (Appendix 1), the purpose of which is to identify and mitigate the risk of possible flaws in the biosafety protocols, using analytical tools to improve processes, activities, resources, designs, among other procedures established for the reactive, preventive and predictive implementation of the biosafety protocol. The primary objective is to make the system more reliable through a process of continuous improvement, identifying the probabilities of failure in critical barriers by means of biosafety performance indicators (BSPI), in order to enforce a surveillance system based on barrier quality levels, and on analytical findings to reduce the residual risk of failures permanently.

3.3 In the course of 2020, a number of sample surveys were conducted at the Juan Santamaría International Airport in Costa Rica, using the tools created, which made it possible to develop indicators during the initial phase of introduction and implementation of the protocol at this airport.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 In addition to the established protocols, it was found necessary to develop procedural templates for the passenger process; accordingly, the COCESNA-ACSA technical team devised a model package of procedures to provide support to the region, which can be used by the industry and by the civil aviation authorities of States to develop their own harmonized and measurable procedures in each of the international and domestic civil aviation systems.

4.2 These procedures should eventually be included in the Airport Emergency Plans.

4.3 To support States in the continual, gradual and harmonized recovery that will make it possible to maintain and increase air transport operations in the Region in the face of the different variants of COVID-19 and similar diseases that may emerge, a pilot plan on the implementation of biosafety protocols on infectious/contagious diseases in the airports of COCESNA Member States will be put into effect, starting with assessments by the ICAO NACC RO and COCESNA ACSA to ensure the efficacy and efficiency of implementation. The purpose of the activity will be to assess the effectiveness of these protocols and identify the advantages of creating a regional public health corridor (PHC), so as to ensure the sustainability and continuity of industry operations.

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