INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION

EIGHTH MEETING OF THE CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITIES OF THE SAM REGION (RAAC/8)

(Buenos Aires, Argentina, 23-25 April, 2003)

Agenda Item: 4 Regional Air Navigation Plan – Transition to the CNS/ATM Systems

MEASURES TO PROTECT RADIO FREQUENCY SPECTRUM

(Presented by IATA)

Summary

The continued availability of secure radio frequency spectrum has been identified by IATA as a key strategic objective for the airline industry. Experience with the World Radio Conferences (WRC) in 1997 and 2000 has shown that aviation must compete more effectively in the future with other users for a share of this scarce resource.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 As the demand for air transport grows unabated, the ability of airports and airspace to safely absorb increased traffic will depend on the continued availability of adequate and interference-free radio spectrum.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Aviation requirements differ markedly from other classes of user. Aviation relies on radio spectrum to conduct its business safely, and hence the assigned frequencies are classified as “Safety of Life” services. It does not make a direct business from the use of spectrum, and thus cannot compete financially with communication service providers.

2.2 Aviation is criticized as making ineffective use of certain allocated bands and as not being responsive to new more spectrum efficient technology. However, it must be remembered that aviation is subject to a rigorous safety assurance regime unlike any other form of business, and certainly one that competing commercial communications service providers are not accustomed to. The complex regulated certification process, including the standardization of design and airworthiness approval for aircraft systems, covers several years. As a result, aviation can not sustain frequent changes in technology, and should be assured a stable period for return on investment in air safety.

3. FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

3.1 Contrary to some expectations, aviation is likely to need more, not less spectrum in the future to accommodate infrastructure capacity expansion, as well as customer demands for enhanced in-flight services. Present aviation systems will become redundant in the future, however they can only be decommissioned if adequate spectrum is secured for their replacements.

3.2 IATA worked closely with ICAO in successfully identifying, publicizing, and presenting industry requirements to WRC 2000. This effort was supported by a limited aviation lobby. Close cooperation continued in the preparation for WRC 2003. IATA has expressed support to the ICAO policy statements on radio frequency spectrum contained in Document 9718. A detailed awareness program has been set in motion, including regional workshops.

4. INDUSTRY CONCERNS

4.1 It remains a matter of serious concern that the aviation industry, representing one of the largest engines of the global economy and with globally established safety standards, faces a lack of national support in the ITU spectrum allocation process. There are signs that individual Radio Administrations under the pressure of large telecommunication industries are increasingly of the view that arguments of air safety and economics, advanced by the aviation community, are being used to promote unjustified claims on a large part of the scarce radio spectrum resources. It is imperative therefore for aviation's future that this perception is corrected at a national level, and that aviation increase its involvement in the national and Regional process leading up to ITU WRCs.Greater government commitment to the interests of aviation is necessary. Industry technical requirement must receive high level political support.

5. ACTION REQUESTED

5.1 The meeting is urged to recommend stronger member State action to safeguard the role of aviation in the spectrum allocation process. In particular, to ensure a tight co-ordination between the parties representing aviation in the CITEL preparation for the ITU WRCs..

- END -