



**Agenda Item 6: Other business**

**COMPLIANCE WITH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS**

(Presented by the Secretariat)

<b>SUMMARY</b>	
This working paper presents a summary of the development of language proficiency requirements for pilots and air traffic controllers. It also presents an analysis of the level of compliance by the States of the Region with these requirements, and some recommendations to strengthen safety oversight.	
<b>References:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports of the RASG-PA/ESC/28 and 29 meetings</li> <li>• RASG-PA website: <a href="http://www.rasg-pa.org">www.rasg-pa.org</a></li> </ul>	
<i>ICAO strategic objectives:</i>	<i>A – Safety</i>

**1. Introduction**

1.1 Up until March 2003, provisions on the use of language emanated from two recommended practices contained in Annex 10 and a standard contained in Annex 1. Annex 10 recommended that communications be conducted in English if the aircraft station was unable to communicate in the language used in the station on the ground.

1.2 In 2004, ICAO published Doc 9835/Annex 453, which clearly established the obligation of properly using standard phraseology in aeronautical communications. It also established that in those cases in which this was not possible, English should be used, expressed in plain language, to which end pilots and controllers should demonstrate a minimum level of language proficiency.

1.3 Resolution A36-11 urges the Council to provide guidance to the States in the process of preparing and implementing action plans to meet these requirements. At present, the minimum level required for granting the licence is 4 or higher. In order to reach that level, controllers must obtain at least 4 in each competency area, assessed in accordance with the ICAO rating scale. The level of proficiency will be the lowest level obtained in the language descriptors.

1.4 Annex 1, Personnel Licensing, through amendment 164 approved on 5 March 2003, establishes that language proficiency requirements are to be applied to applicants and holders of pilot licences of aeroplanes, airships, helicopters and vertical take-off aircraft, air traffic controllers, and

aeronautical station operators, in accordance with the scale established by ICAO in the documents mentioned in the previous paragraphs.

## **2. Status of the Region regarding language proficiency level of air traffic controllers**

2.1 Language proficiency requirements are aimed at helping reduce the level of risk associated to aeronautical communications, especially those that deviate from the ICAO standard aeronautical phraseology that must be used at all times as the main method for communications between pilots and controllers.

2.2 Proficiency level 4 is the minimum level that an air traffic controller or pilot should have to work in an environment where communications take place in the language of the station and in English. In the case of air traffic controllers that work in air traffic units where communications take place in Spanish or Portuguese, but also in English, the minimum level that controllers should have when exercising the privileges of their licence or rating is level 4.

2.3 During the first semester of this year, the SRVSOP did “*benchmarking*” of the level of language proficiency of air traffic controllers of the SAM Region, based on information from licencing departments. The results show that although there are States with a high percentage of controllers with level 4 and 6 of language proficiency, there are still States that need to develop a strategy to improve compliance with this requirement (see Table I in **Appendix A**).

2.4 Authorities should make sure that the level of risk related to aeronautical communications is within an acceptable level, through the adoption of the necessary mitigation and correction measures until the personnel involved in aeronautical communications attains the level established by the requirements.

2.5 States must make the necessary efforts to carry out safety oversight of the language proficiency certifying centres, in accordance with ICAO Doc 9835 and the checklist contained in Chapter 3 of ICAO Circular 318. Likewise, States should perform random samplings to make sure that certifying centres are doing the assessments in accordance with the relevant requirements.

2.6 It should be noted that those States that do not adopt the proper language proficiency certification and oversight measures in accordance with ICAO requirements could qualify, at any given time and if the risk so warrants, for a significant safety concern (SSC).

## **3. Suggested action**

3.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) take note of the information provided herein;
- b) establish relevant measures to ensure compliance with language proficiency requirements, including oversight of certifying centres and random sampling; and
- c) coordinate with the SAM Office any support needed to meet the requirements mentioned in this working paper.

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## APPENDIX A

TABLE I

State	Total CTA in service	% with level 4	% with level 5	% with level 6	% Total of controllers satisfying requirements
Argentina *					
Bolivia	217	16%	5%	9%	30%
Brazil - DECEA	3426	29%	11%	3%	43%
Chile	392	93%	---	---	93%
Colombia	614	63.2%	2.8%	0	66%
Cuba	180	77%	17%		94%
Ecuador	237	58%	6%	1,50%	65%
Panama	175	34%	21%	26%	81%
Paraguay	36	67%	33%	0%	100%
Peru	235	72%	18%	7%	97%
Uruguay	94	37%	50%	13%	100%
Venezuela*					

\* No updated information available