



International Civil Aviation Organization
South American Regional Office

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Agenda Item 3: Innovation in Aviation Facilitation and Security aspects in the recovery framework

**FACING COVID IN THE AERONAUTICAL SYSTEM
THE EXPERIENCE OF CHILE**

(Presented by Chile)

SUMMARY

This paper presents the experience of Chile in maintaining aerodrome and AVSEC/FAL services available for air cargo and passengers, to ensure the connectivity of the regions, mobility of its citizens, and to promote the resilience of the aviation system in order to face COVID.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has affected Chile as well as other States in the world, placing its citizens at health risk, causing an impact on the critical systems, severely limiting people's mobility. The pandemic has also had a strong impact on the air transport industry, tourism, cargo, factories, service companies, infrastructure development, among others, generating devastating economic and social effects, unprecedented in modern history.

1.2 Chile, through the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, has adhered to the guiding principles of the SAM Regional Office strategy to address COVID at the South American level, such as conducting domestic coordination among authorities, adopting simple but effective measures to contribute in mitigating the circulation of the virus, that is, strengthening the effective information about measures taken to the passengers, the air transport and tourism industry, and authorities in all regions of the country; and especially the concrete action to implement all those measures that the health authority establishes for its application in the aeronautical field, not only towards users but also within our organization, a fundamental pillar of the national aeronautical system.

1.3 As with any complex system, the measures adopted in Chile to promote the resilience of the aeronautical system in the aerodrome service and in AVSEC/FAL, for cargo and passengers, at a given airport, are not the result of isolated decisions taken by the aeronautical authority, but rather decisions coordinated with other government authorities. Thus, we have successfully completed each and every one of the required coordinations at the different levels of action and areas of influence in the community that manages and implements the pandemic control provisions.

1.4 The resilience of the aeronautical system and its airport processes, to ensure the recovery and resumption of aviation activities in a sustainable manner, is not a function of technical decisions at airports but of State capacity balancing in which the most critical variable is the hospital capacity to recover

infected patients and the rate of infection due to virus circulation. Thus, we have actively participated as facilitators in the patient management regarding their air transfer.

2. THE EXPERIENCE OF CHILE

2.1 With regard to coordination between authorities and effective information on measures adopted at airports:

- a) At the highest level of government, the Minister of Health has the leadership, supported by an advisory committee, a COVID-19 roundtable, a public-private consultative council, and a mental health and welfare roundtable. The minister gives a daily public report on virus circulation indicators, results of the vaccination plan and measures adopted in the step-by-step plan as part of the deconfinement strategy;
- b) At the airport level, effective coordination and communication takes place in the management committees with terminal operators; security committees and facilitation committees, all derived from higher national committees; and
- c) The lesson learned in this area is that counting with these national and airport committees, with varying levels of maturity since well before the pandemic, facilitated the adoption of coordinated measures to address COVID-19. As of 29 July 2021, more than 25 million doses of vaccine have been transported to achieve coverage of over 88% of the citizens vaccinated with one or two doses. In this context, the Aeronautical System has been made available for the timely transfer of vaccines, being the air means one more component that adds safety and timeliness in this work, responding to the expectations of the highest governmental authorities.

2.2 With regard to aerodrome services:

- a) The seven international airports and all aerodromes in the national network have remained operational to maintain connectivity between cities and the rest of the world. Aeronautical services have also remained operational and, in public-private collaboration, maintaining, for example, airport expansion plans, especially the major works at Santiago/Arturo Merino Benitez airport, which continue to make progress and grow in terms of infrastructure and management capacity. In this regard, we have been able to reconcile the effects of the pandemic with the progress of airport infrastructure works. This has made it possible to meet the commitments we have made in terms of aeronautical development.
- b) The decision to open or close air, sea, or land borders is a political decision that is taken periodically according to the results of the step-by-step plan of the Ministry of Health. Thus, flexibility is an element that allows us to respond to the evolution of the pandemic in our country, flexibility that is present in the management within our organization, but not without problems that we have been able to resolve.
- c) The lesson learned in the aerodrome service is that maintaining balanced staffing at airports, with all the preventive health measures, has meant facilitating connectivity in the event of interregional health emergencies and facilitating the distribution of vaccines nationwide in an agile and expeditious manner; and
- d) Maintaining the timely availability of the airport network for the State to fulfil its role has revealed the need for flexibility and an adequate operational management to respond in a timely manner in the always changing health scenario.

2.3 With regard to AVSEC/FAL services to passengers at aerodromes, and air cargo:

- a) At the political level, the Ministry of Health has established a system of Sanitary Barriers, and circulation permits, which allows the mobility of people depending on the stage of the step-by-step plan at the specific location, which is reported on a daily basis;
- b) At the airport level, this has meant installing health barriers with health personnel at the airport premises, supported by police and armed forces personnel, at the entrance to the terminal. At these barriers, body temperature is measured and a health passport called C19, which has with a QR code and provides information on origin and destination must be shown, allowing its use with a cell phone. The impact of the crisis in the country during the period January-December 2020 dropped from approximately 26 million passengers to 9 million, a drop of more than 65% of passengers carried;
- c) As of 26 July 2021, the measures for international travel have been made more flexible, meeting certain requirements to improve the traceability of possible sources of contagion;
- d) Air cargo transport has behaved in a particular, with particular restrictions;
- e) Air cargo, as opposed to passenger transport, had a slight increase in aggregate national and international figures;
- f) The lesson learned is that the solution to the mobility of people and the reactivation of the air transport industry of people, air cargo and tourism, has no single solution. The interaction of technical, health and political variables must be weighted according to their nature, and then the plan of deconfinement and flexibility of individual freedoms of mobility must be designed.
- g) As an aeronautical authority, we are committed to maintaining our airport capabilities at the disposal of the political authorities, in order to facilitate the actions of the State and not to become an operational obstacle. To achieve this, we have kept our aeronautical, operational and administrative personnel aware of their role and the importance of the public function provided by the State in the emergency. Air navigation safety and aviation security have been maintained in all their fields of action and responsibility, especially in the necessary air cargo activity, which has not diminished. It is them, the aeronautical men and women, who deserve our recognition, since they are the pillar on which our service is based.

3. **SUGGESTED ACTION**

3.1 The Fifth Virtual Meeting of Directors General of Civil Aviation of the South American (SAM) Region on the Response to COVID-19 is invited to:

- a) consider the information provided in this working paper; and exchange experiences on lessons learned in dealing with COVID;
- b) recognise that the existence of security and facilitation committees at the national and airport levels, and an efficient communication mechanism among them, improve the levels of coordination among the authorities.

- c) recognise that the Aeronautical System is an engine of economic and social development of the State, which must be available in terms of personnel and services for the recovery of the post-pandemic industry;
- d) note that the effective communication of measures from the government level to the airport level, contributes to the implementation of effective measures with full awareness by the industry and travellers, decision making and management agents, as well as favours the internal management in our organization obtaining guidance with a full understanding by our aeronautical personnel;
- e) recognise that the resilience of the Aeronautical System and air transport processes is a combination of political and technical measures, in which a subset of the aeronautical system can partially compensate, without being at its optimum, the losses of another subset of the system, such as passengers versus air cargo. The DGAC of Chile has been undoubtedly affected by the pandemic, but in a health emergency the absolutes are not necessarily given. The DGCA of Chile provides the service that all citizens expect. We are aware that the aeronautical system will be, post pandemic, the engine of development to regain the rythm;
- f) consider submitting this working paper to the HLCC for analysis and for recognition of the importance of coordinated work within States in this type of health emergencies, additionally, it should be noted that the aeronautical systems of the countries must be interrelated with the authorities internally since they constitute a strategic pillar for the management of the pandemic, which responds to the expectations for the benefit of the best development of our society;
- g) promote the common understanding of the concepts that have guided the actions of this Directorate General of Civil Aviation of Chile in pandemics, mainly the following:
 - **Resilience:** we are a system that must be prepared to face current situations (contingency) and also future challenges. Permanently observing the context that surrounds and conditions us, as well as in an internal context in order to strengthen the organization.
 - **Coordination:** To promote coordination between State agencies at different levels and fields of action. Also with civil organizations, which are part of the aeronautical community, regardless of their significance or dimension, also to receive the concerns of the aeronautical industry and companies for their consideration.
 - **Facilitator:** We are a service that facilitates the actions of the State, acting with flexibility to respond to its strategies with the expected agility.
 - **Strategic Pillar:** The National Aeronautical System is a strategic element for the development and welfare of citizens, with strong influence towards and from the international community. This pillar is no stranger to detecting options for improvement and feedback in a process of continuous critical analysis.