



International Civil Aviation Organization
South American Regional Office

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

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

FACILITATION OF AIR TRANSPORT IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This working paper presents aspects pertaining to facilitation in the context of COVID-19 that are related to the recommendations contained in the Council Aviation Recovery Taskforce (CART) Phase I, II and III reports and, also, in the agenda of the High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021).

Its purpose is to encourage States in the Region to consider and promote facilitation in the framework of air transport and to participate in HLCC 2021 to share their experiences and actions in the area of facilitation in the context of the pandemic.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Since the beginning of the crisis caused by the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has, through the Council Aviation Recovery Taskforce (CART) and, regionally, through the *SAM Region Strategic Framework in Response to COVID-19*¹, arranged to work with its member States, international and regional organisations and industry, to address these challenges and provide guidance for the safe, secure and sustainable resumption and recovery of the aviation sector worldwide.

1.2 CART recommendations and the document *The Takeoff: Guidance for Air Transport during the COVID-19 Health Crisis* set out a practical and harmonised guidance framework for governments and industry operators to restart the international air transport sector and recover from the impact of COVID-19 in a globally coordinated manner.

1.3 Similarly, the guiding principles of the SAM strategic framework are fundamental to ensure the successful implementation of the different actions deemed necessary in each of the phases of resumption and reactivation of operations, and the subsequent building of the system's resilience.

1.4 Air transport facilitation as an major concept in addressing the pandemic is highlighted especially in CART recommendations 6, 7, 9 and 17, and in the governing principles of the SAM Region Strategic Framework: # 1 Collaboration, # 2 Coordination, # 4 Effective Communication and # 8 Simplicity.

¹ <https://www.icao.int/SAM/SECURITY-FACILITATION/COVID-19/Pages/COVID19-StrategicFramework.aspx>

1.5 The High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021) to be held from 12 to 22 October 2021 includes a component on facilitation on its agenda that will highlight the importance of national coordination among the different stakeholders involved in crisis management, and the need for greater use of advanced and digital technologies to exchange passenger health data and facilitate the clearance of the traveling public without physical contact at different travel stages.

1.6 Facilitation is recognised as a key component in efforts to maintain continuity of aviation-related operations during the pandemic, and to encourage effective and sustainable aviation resumption and recovery after COVID-19. Given the diversity of issues covered under the topic of facilitation, the struggle against the pandemic and the recovery of operations, States are encouraged to consider assessing, proposing associated actions, developing and/or supporting actions to achieve their objectives. The issues will be presented in section 2 hereunder.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Operational facilitation measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic and thereafter

2.1.1 Mutually accepted and globally and regionally harmonised operational facilitation measures are essential and should be consistent with safety requirements and proportionate to the evolution of the public health situation.

2.1.2 In this regard, States are encouraged to consider existing measures as well as the practical application of Public Health Risk Mitigation Measures (PHRMM) in aviation and implement the directives outlined in CART guidance material and in ICAO Doc 10152, considering the importance of conducting risk assessments by taking into account State contextual factors, risk tolerance and the practical application of public health risk mitigation measures in aviation.

2.1.3 Effective communication of public health measures, travel restrictions and other requirements is essential to secure air operations, and States should not enforce measures that are not in harmony with the guidelines from relevant organisations.

2.2 Strengthening national coordination and international cooperation

2.2.1 Collaboration between public health and aviation authorities, which is necessary to facilitate effective air transport operations, has shown its limitations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Progress in facilitation depends on the coordination of various interests and the cooperation of the various agencies involved. Implementation of the National Air Transport Facilitation Programme (NATFP), the establishment and active operation of National Air Transport Facilitation Committees (NATFCs) or their equivalent, is a proven means of making the necessary improvements in dispatch control formalities and achieving a coordinated approach among all stakeholders involved in a pandemic response.

2.2.2 In addition to Annex 9, standards and recommended practices (SARPs) addressing public health risks are also included in other ICAO Annexes, namely: Annex 6, Annex 11, Annex 14, Annex 15 and Annex 18.

2.2.3 Improving public health-related SARPs and the guidance material in the various Annexes, and aligning them with CART guidance and other valid policies within the United Nations system, can provide a unified framework that will enhance national and international cooperation in multiple sectors.

2.2.4 Similarly, strengthening the appropriate authority for air transport facilitation, taking the necessary steps to ensure a systematic development of the NATFP and ensuring that all relevant State entities and agencies effectively participate in the NATFC, or its equivalent, are fundamental to national coordination on Facilitation and to the effective implementation of the provisions in Annex 9.

2.2.5 In addition to the framework for coordination and collaboration among authorities, the training of experts on facilitation is important in order to ensure that Annex 9 concepts are considered in State decisions, and to facilitate coordination of any implementation measures. The ICAO Annex 9 - Facilitation course is now available in both virtual and face-to-face formats.

2.2.6 With respect to international cooperation, the ICAO Cooperative Arrangement to Prevent the Spread of Communicable Diseases through Air Travel (CAPSCA) Executive Committee is a collaborative network of States, as well as of international, regional, national and local stakeholders representing multiple sectors, aimed at assisting States with the implementation of public health related SARPs and the WHO International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005), and improving preparedness planning and the rapid response to any public health emergencies that may affect the aviation sector.

2.2.7 During the COVID-19 pandemic, CAPSCA has played a key role in the provision of information, enabling multi-stakeholder decision-making and ensuring the dissemination of relevant information. Similarly, the demand that the pandemic has generated on the Committee and the number of organisations and States that have joined CAPSCA since the beginning of the pandemic, requires the mapping all relevant stakeholders and the establishment of sustainable funding mechanisms and the corresponding human resources, in line with their inclusion in future strategies.

2.3 **Encourage digital data exchange to facilitate seamless and contact-free processes during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond**

2.3.1 Digital solutions facilitate rapid and efficient reorganisation of cross-border and airport processes, smoother and queue-free movements and non-contact travel. The aviation community has required the application of such solutions for a safe restart during the COVID-19 pandemic, but, in many cases, existing capabilities and infrastructure have prevented this. There is a recognised need to improve data sharing possibilities and capacities between government and the private sector, in order to facilitate more seamless travel processes, without physical contact.

2.3.2 States and industry have invested for years in facilitating passenger processing for seamless, non-contact processes. The importance of these efforts has grown during the COVID-19 pandemic, given the need to limit personal interactions and physical contact, and has also become more difficult due to public health-related transit, entry and exit requirements, making it difficult to comply with the protocols that require distancing.

2.3.3 This situation calls for a need to standardise and harmonise the new health requirements with the existing border control and passenger processing tools, and with the new tools developed to accommodate the new requirements within a standardised, harmonised and interoperable framework. ICAO has developed a variety of tools and capabilities² that can provide the bases for a digital ecosystem that supports contact-free processing, with no interoperability problems, nor information security and privacy issues.

2.3.4 States should consider the digitisation of passenger processing in accordance with ICAO standards and international guidelines, to indicate that passengers and crew members have complied with requirements to prevent and mitigate the spread of communicable diseases.

2.4 **Future approaches for the management of sustainable health-related facilitation measures that enhance the experience of the passenger and promote enforcement oversight**

2.4.1 Currently, only aviation security-related standards are audited under the Universal Security Audit Programme-Continuous Monitoring Approach (USAP-CMA). Processes applicable in the case of communicable diseases and systems of assistance to aviation accident victims and their families are audited

² <https://www.icao.int/Security/FAL/TRIP/Pages/Publications.aspx>

under the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme - Continuous Monitoring Approach (USOAP-CMA). It has become necessary to examine and propose a way to effectively monitor the implementation of new and/or revised health-related provisions to be recommended for implementation by Member States.

2.4.2 The number of elderly and disabled persons travelling by air continues to increase as they take advantage of increased opportunities for domestic and international air travel. However, there are still many barriers that limit the ability of the elderly, and persons with disabilities, to take full advantage of international air travel services. These barriers, in addition to having an adverse humanitarian effect on many potential air travellers, pose additional challenges in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.4.3 ICAO already has SARPs and guidance material in Doc 9984 - *Manual on Access to Air Transport by Persons with Disabilities*, related to the facilitation of transport for persons with disabilities, and these generally seek to ensure that airport facilities and services are adapted to their needs. In this regard, States are strongly encouraged to provide special assistance in a manner that respects the dignity of the individual, and are also encouraged to cooperate appropriately to make all elements of travel accessible to persons with disabilities.

2.5 **Public Health Corridor (PHC)**

2.5.1 Existing cooperation mechanisms may not be sufficient to implement bilateral or multilateral agreements among States during public health emergencies, especially when several States and multiple sectors are involved. Future public health emergencies may require different considerations, in light of different epidemiological scenarios, or different types of public health events, which will require the development of a comprehensive multi-scenario framework to implement a PHC during public health emergencies in a more harmonised and timely manner.

2.5.2 A PHC is formed when two or more States, or Regions, agree to recognise the public health risk mitigation (PHM) measures that each has implemented on one or more routes between their States, within which air travel may resume. The establishment of PHCs between States requires the exchange of information within the State's national departments, as well as internationally between States, which requires cooperative decision-making.

2.5.3 Depending on the agreements reached between States, the crew or passengers could be exempted from COVID-19 testing, quarantine and other requirements. Such agreements should consider risk assessments, and be based on principles that consider aspects of public health, operational need, epidemiological parameters, testing and vaccination policies and communication mechanisms between States, to enable decision-making by taking under consideration mutual recognition of acceptable risks between States.

2.5.4 As discussions develop for the implementation of health corridors in the Region, States are encouraged to recognise the importance of developing a multi-scenario framework for the implementation of PHC during public health emergencies, and continue to provide support to ICAO, in order to make progress in the work of a PHC.

3. **CONCLUSION**

3.1 States should consider the topics presented under Section 2 of this working paper, and develop actions to strengthen facilitation in States, as a policy for the development of air transport and for addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and other Public Health Events of International Concern (PHEICs) that may affect us in the future.

3.2 The High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC) is an opportunity for States to present their actions and comments to strengthen aviation resilience and make it more sustainable in the future. The facilitation component of the Conference will discuss the issues presented in this working paper, and the

ICAO SAM Regional Office is available to provide support, as needed, for the submission of topics by the States of our Region.

4. **SUGGESTED ACTION**

4.1 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) take note of the importance of facilitation in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic;
- b) define actions to strengthen the area of facilitation in States, especially the effective implementation of the NATFP and NATFC;
- c) encourage civil aviation authorities to update their organizational charts, and develop training programmes for experts in the area of facilitation;
- d) analyse the working papers on facilitation of the High-level Conference on COVID-19 and make proposals that could promote and strengthen collective initiatives for the harmonisation of measures in the States of the SAM Region; and
- e) actively participate in CAPSCA, and collaborate in the development of a strategy to implement the recommendations of both the CART and of the Public Health Authorities of their States.

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