



Item 3A
Of the Agenda: Environment

REGIONAL COOPERATION IN RESPONSE TO DISASTER SITUATIONS

Working Paper presented by Colombia, "*The Country of Beauty*"

SUMMARY	
<p>This study note examines issues arising from disaster situations affecting States and proposes the establishment of regulatory provisions and international cooperation mechanisms within the SAM Region to facilitate and expedite the mobility and entry of aircraft, crews, and trained personnel for disaster response. Additionally, it suggests the development of information systems to enable States to quickly locate and contact the necessary assistance from other countries.</p>	
<p>References</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Article 3 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation - Annex 9 to the Convention <p>AN-Conf/14-WP/141 (30/6/24) – International Cooperation for Large-Scale Fire Suppression (Presented by Colombia)</p>	
<p>ICAO Strategic Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Operational Safety</i> - <i>Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency</i> - <i>Aviation Security and Facilitation</i> - <i>Every flight is safe (Safety and Security)</i> - <i>Aviation provides seamless, accessible, and reliable mobility for all</i> - <i>No Country is Left Behind</i>

1. Introduction

1.1 El The use of aircraft has proven to be highly effective in responding to both natural and man- made disasters.

1.2 For instance, in the case of large-scale wildfires, the airborne application of water or fire retardants using specially equipped aircraft has been an effective means of combating fires, as highlighted in the Study Note presented by Colombia during the Fourteenth Air Navigation Conference (AN-Conf/14- WP/141) held in Montreal in 2024. This effectiveness was evident in wildfires affecting several countries in the region—Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, and Colombia in 2024, as well as the United States in early 2025.

1.3 Similarly, air transport is crucial for search and rescue missions and humanitarian relief efforts during natural disasters such as earthquakes. Given that much of South America is prone to seismic activity, air transport plays a vital role in delivering personnel and equipment to support rescue operations.

1.4 The importance of aviation in disaster response was also demonstrated in Colombia in 2023, during the search and rescue of four children who survived a plane crash in the Amazon rainforest. The success of these missions would have been unthinkable without aerial support.

1.5 Despite the critical role of aviation in disaster response, the entry and transit of aircraft, crews, and personnel is not always sufficiently expeditious. The movement of relief aircraft across international borders is often hindered by bureaucratic constraints, slow authorization processes, and restrictive customs procedures, leading to delays that can worsen emergency situations. It is, therefore, essential to establish a legal and regulatory framework accompanied by international cooperation mechanisms that will: Facilitate and expedite the mobility and entry of aircraft, crews, and disaster response personnel. Streamline entry permits and customs procedures to ensure rapid deployment. Enhance coordination among States to allow seamless cross-border relief operations.

1.6 Similarly, more specific entry and exit procedures for aircraft and personnel are needed beyond what is currently provided in Annex 9 to the Chicago Convention to achieve greater agility and speed in the assistance that other States can provide.

1.7 It is important to consider that not all aircraft used for fire suppression are necessarily civil; some may be State aircraft, which is why the possibility of granting the same expedited treatment to these aircraft should be considered, in accordance with Article 3(c) of the Chicago Convention.

1.8 However, States do not always have immediate access to information that allows them to know which other States to turn to and what aircraft, equipment, or personnel they have or could offer in each case. The lack of this information requires valuable time to obtain it and make the necessary contacts, causing delays that can exacerbate the situation. To address this issue, it is also necessary to adopt measures to ensure the availability of information on which States can help, as well as the organizations, individuals, aircraft, and equipment available for such support

2. Discussion

2.1 The vast magnitude that natural or man-made disasters can reach may exceed the response capacity of the affected State, forcing it to seek help from other States, preferably neighboring ones for quicker assistance.

2.2 Additionally, it is necessary to expand the scope of the provisions in Annex 9. This document includes regulations on "Disaster relief flights in cases of natural or man-made disasters that severely endanger human health or the environment, and in similar emergency situations requiring United Nations assistance." These provisions indeed commit States to facilitating the entry, exit, and transit through their territory of relief flights operated by internationally recognized organizations under the United Nations, on their behalf, or by States on their behalf. However, they are not detailed enough to facilitate the practical implementation of this cooperation mechanism.

2.3 The same international regulation defines relief flights as: "(...) those conducted to mitigate the effects of natural or man-made disasters that seriously endanger human health or the environment, and in similar emergency situations requiring United Nations assistance." During a disaster and an ongoing emergency, it is not always easy to quickly determine whether United Nations assistance is needed, meaning

from all its member States. At that moment, the only decisive factor will likely be that the disaster's magnitude has exceeded or is about to exceed the State's capacity to respond effectively, regardless of whether the required assistance comes from the United Nations or another entity.

2.4 Naturally, the Annex provides States with general guidelines on what to do, but not how to do it. Therefore, an additional instrument or document is required to enable States to request or offer the needed assistance, accompanied by a highly agile procedure for its implementation, ensuring that personnel, aircraft, and equipment can enter or transit through third-party States expediently, including the temporary acceptance of civil operators' capabilities.

2.5 It is essential to consider that both personnel and aircraft used in these missions will not always be of a civil nature. Therefore, it will be necessary to ensure that when State aircraft are involved, they receive treatment like that given to civilian aircraft, without prejudice to the provisions of Article 3(c) of the Chicago Convention.

2.6 In addition to the above, it would be highly beneficial to have a register or database where States can quickly consult available personnel, aircraft, and equipment that each country can provide in a disaster response scenario.

2.7 It is also important for States to consider the costs associated with this service or support and the arrangements that should be made in that regard.

3. **Recommended actions**

3.1 Invited the meeting:

1. The ICAO SAM region

- a) Establish a regulatory and legal framework, along with corresponding international cooperation mechanisms, to facilitate and expedite the movement and entry of aircraft, crews, and trained personnel for disaster response through the flexibilization of entry permits, customs procedures, and operational regulations.
- b) Develop an information system listing organizations, aircraft, personnel, and equipment that each State could provide to others if necessary for responding to natural or man-made disasters.