



International Civil Aviation Organization

**The Third Meeting of the APANPIRG ATM Sub-Group
(ATM /SG/3)**

Bangkok, Thailand, 3-7 August 2015

Agenda Item X: XXXXXXXX

**AIRLINE CONCERNS REGARDING THE WIDESPREAD IMPACT OF SEVERE FLIGHT
DELAYS IN CHINA**

(Presented by IATA)

SUMMARY

This paper presents the airline industry's concerns regarding severe flight delays in China and requests that Chinese authorities give urgent attention to flight delay reduction by focusing on increasing airspace/airport capacity, permitting operational flexibility, improving ATFM predictability, strengthening civil-military ATM cooperation and adopting international best practice where appropriate.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 China's air transport industry, both domestic and international, has experienced consistent double-digit percentage growth in recent years. Contemporaneous with this growth, delays have become increasingly severe, particularly during the summer months when convective weather is prevalent or during times of high military activity.

1.2 The overall on time performance rate for China has dropped from 77.09% in 2011 to 68.37% in 2014. These figures, obtained from official Chinese data, are measured from a 30 minute delay point whereas the industry standard is 15 minutes. It is highly likely that if the global benchmark was used the on-time performance metric would be even worse.

1.3 Thus far in 2015 flight delays in China, especially at major hub airports such as Pudong, Guangzhou and Beijing, appear to have worsened. Furthermore, the impact of traffic restrictions issued by ATC at these airports regularly cascades to other Asian regional hub airports, at times resulting in extensive flight departure delays of 5-6 hours or greater. Significant delays are also experienced by aircraft transiting (not landing in China) Chinese airspace. Delays of this magnitude are not regularly experienced anywhere else in the world, even in jurisdictions with comparable or higher traffic volumes.

1.4 There are currently more than 100 international carriers flying to/from or through Chinese airspace with the majority operating long or ultra-long haul international flights. The severe delays in China and ensuing disruption have generated tremendous additional operational expenses for these carriers, largely because the industry must bear the significant costs associated with hundreds of thousands of passengers who have been stranded in airports or missed their connections. Disruption on this scale also has a significant social dimension with passengers missing important personal or business events as their travel plans are altered through large delays or cancellations.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The Chinese aviation system has in place excellent communication, navigation and surveillance (CNS) infrastructure. There are many large airports with multiple runways and excellent facilities. Air traffic controllers are well-trained with ready access to modern air traffic management tools. Despite this, when any adverse conditions (e.g. convective weather) are experienced, the typical delays imposed reach levels not regularly experienced anywhere else in the world. The scale of these delays strongly calls into question the ability of China's ATC system to operate to an acceptable level of efficiency in anything other than perfect weather conditions.

2.2 Delays generated in China, regularly cascade throughout the Asia-Pacific region and negatively impact multiple States. This issue is also raised in a paper to be presented by the Mekong Group at this meeting.

2.3 Of particular concern is the fact that significant traffic restrictions from China are often imposed with no advance notice when aircraft on the ground have already loaded passengers, or aircraft already airborne are left with limited options causing diversions. Both these situations impose a considerable logistical and economic burden on airlines.

2.4 The international air transport industry requests that Chinese authorities acknowledge this urgent issue and work collaboratively with industry and adjacent States on immediate actions to improve ATC service quality and to mitigate the delays as quickly as possible. Suggested actions include:

- 2.4.1 *Increase airport and airspace capacity:* open Chinese domestic routes and conditional routes to international carriers, and study/implement industry best practices for maximizing airspace and airport runway capacity;
- 2.4.2 *Permit operational flexibility:* amend relevant regulations and procedures to allow the full use of all published air routes by airlines, based on the weather conditions on the day of operations;
- 2.4.3 *Improve ATFM predictability:* enable full situational awareness to all operators, including international carriers, to ensure the full participation of international carriers in a *truly collaborative* CDM process;
- 2.4.4 *Strengthen civil-military ATC cooperation:* ensure early notification of air route/airspace closures attributable to military activity and eliminate unnecessary administrative approvals regarding the use of alternate routes in urgent operational situations or during periods of adverse weather/high military activity;
- 2.4.5 *Adopt international standards and best-practice:* implement infrastructure upgrades and adopt worlds' best new technologies, procedures and practices in compliance with international standards, to further improve ATC service quality.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

- 3.1 The meeting is invited to;
- a) Note the information contained in this paper; and,
 - b) Discuss any relevant matters as appropriate.

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