

INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION



**AFI PLANNING
AND IMPLEMENTATION REGIONAL GROUP (APIRG)
REPORT OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE
AFI OPMET MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE (AFI MTF/5)**

(Nairobi, Kenya, 3 - 5 July 2013)

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PART 1 - HISTORY OF THE MEETING

1.1 Date and Site of the Meeting

1.1.1 The fifth meeting of the AFI OPMET Management Task Force (MTF/5) was held at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Eastern and Southern African (ESAF) Regional Office, Nairobi Kenya, from 3 to 5 July 2013.

1.2 Officers and Secretariat

1.2.1 The meeting was opened by Mr. B. Sekwati, the Deputy Regional Director, ICAO ESAF Office at 9.15 hours on behalf of Mr. Meshesha Belayneh, the Regional Director ICAO ESAF Regional Office. He extended a warm welcome to participants and thanked their administrations for facilitating their participation.

1.2.2 He reminded the participants that the main objective of the meeting was to review new OPMET information requirements and develop procedures for monitoring and management of their exchange in the AFI Region taking into account the actual technical possibilities and capabilities of the existing telecommunication network systems. He expressed satisfaction that the Task Force would be able to provide substantial material for the eleventh meeting of the Meteorology Sub- Group which was to follow immediately after the MTF/5 meeting.

1.2.3 He concluded by wishing the Task Force successful deliberations.

1.2.4. The Chair of the Task Force, Mr. Winstone Gicheru, presided over the meeting throughout its duration, assisted by the Vice-Chair of the Task Force, Mr. Albert Moloto.

1.2.5 Mr. Vitalis Ahago, Regional Officer, Aeronautical Meteorology, ICAO Eastern and Southern African Office, Nairobi, Kenya, served as the Secretary assisted by Mr. Benoit Okossi, Regional Officer, Aeronautical Meteorology, ICAO Western and Central African Office, Dakar, Senegal.

1.3 Attendance

1.3.1 The meeting was attended by eight (8) participants from four (4) Member States and one Regional Organization (ASECNA).

1.3.2 The list of participants is at **Appendix 1A**.

1.4 Working Languages

1.4.1 The discussions were conducted in the English language only as per APIRG procedures concerning Task Force.

1.5 Agenda

1.5.1 The following Agenda was adopted:

- Agenda Item 1: Election of Chairperson and vice Chairperson of the Task Force and adoption of the Agenda.
- Agenda Item 2: Review of MTF/4 recommendations and Decisions.
- Agenda Item 3: Provision of tropical cyclone and volcanic ash advisories for the AFI Region and of the corresponding SIGMET by MWOs and Review of report on SIGMET Tests Conducted in November 2012.
- Agenda Item 4: Review of regional guidance material on OPMET exchange.
- Agenda Item 5: Future developments with regard to OPMET information.
- Agenda Item 6: Terms of reference, work programme and composition of the AFI OPMET MTF.
- Agenda Item 7: Any other business.

1.6 Documentation and working Language

1.6.1 The working language of the meeting as well as the documentation were in English as per APIRG procedures concerning task forces.

1.6.2 Nineteen (19) Working Papers and six (6) Information Papers were presented at the meeting. The list of the papers is included at **Appendix 1B** to this report.

1.7 Recommendations

1.7.1 The OPMET MTF recorded its actions in the form of recommendations and decisions, with the following significance:

- Decisions deal with matters of concern only to the OPMET MTF;
- Recommendations, when reviewed by the MET/SG, become Draft Conclusions for matters which in accordance with the APIRG Terms of Reference, merit the attention of States or on which further action will be initiated by ICAO in accordance with established procedures, or Draft Decisions, when approved by MET/SG, deal with matters of concern only to MET/SG.

PART II- REPORT ON THE AGENDA

Agenda Item 1: Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Subgroup

1.1 In accordance with the relevant provisions contained in the APIRG Procedural Handbook, the Sub-group elected its Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. Mr. Winstone Njuguna Gicheru, MET Inspector, Kenya, and Mr. Albert Moloto, Compliance Officer, South Africa, were elected chairperson and Vice-Chairperson respectively.

Agenda Item 2: Review of the AFI OPMET MTF/4 recommendations and Decisions

2.1 The rapporteur of the Task Force and the Secretariat presented to the meeting a summary of the MTF/4 meeting report. In reviewing the list of Decisions and Recommendations contained in the report, the Task Force amended MTF/4 recommendations and Decision as given in **Appendix 2A**. The Task Force noted that some States were not implementing the AMBEX scheme appropriately. To address this issue, the Task Force was of the opinion that it was necessary to establish a list of OPMET Focal Points for the AFI region as well as adjacent IROGs. In this regard, the Task Force formulated the following Decisions:

Decision 5/01: Establishment of OPMET Focal points.

That, the Secretariat establish a list of OPMET Focal points for AFI States and adjacent IROGs for better management of OPMET data.

2.2 The meeting agreed that in order to increase the availability of required OPMET data in the AFI RODBs through a regular OPMET monitoring process as indicated in the AMBEX Handbook, a set of actions and or measures needed to be developed. In this regard, the meeting formulated the following recommendation.

Recommendation 5/02: Procedure for AFI OPMET data monitoring

That,

- a) **Dakar and Pretoria RODBs implement the following procedure:**
 - 1) **Conduct the monitoring of OPMET received from AFI BCCs within their areas of responsibility;**
 - 2) **Analyze the monitoring results and identify shortcomings and deficiencies;**
 - 3) **Develop and forward on a quarterly basis, the monitoring results and the recommendations to be implemented by the concerned BCC of NOC provider States;**
 - 4) **Engage directly with the concerned State to assist removing the shortcomings which can be solved quickly; and**
 - 5) **Issue on semester basis, a report on the above four actions to be forwarded to ICAO Dakar and Nairobi regional Offices.**
- b) **ICAO Dakar and Nairobi regional Offices**
 - 1) **distribute the report, through State Letters, to AFI States with particular emphasis on the concerned deficient States; and**
 - 2) **Visit the concerned States during State missions for further advice and awareness if necessary.**

Agenda Item 3: Provision of tropical cyclone and volcanic ash for the AFI Region and of the corresponding SIGMET by MWOs and Review of report on SIGMET Tests conducted in November 2013

3.1 The Task Force recalled that MWOs in the AFI Region do not issue AIRMETs as it is not a requirement in the region; however, some States including South Africa have consistently issued AIRMET information.

3.2 In addition, South Africa proposed an amendment to the AFI Air Navigation Plan (Doc 7474) to enable willing States to issue and exchange low level flight information. The meeting recalled that initially, the AIRMET information were not a requirement in the AFI region because of low traffic operations below flight level 100 in the region. The meeting noted however, that the number of such flights had recently increased significantly in some States within the region. Therefore, the MTF formulated the following recommendation:

Recommendation 5/03: Implementation of low level flight information in the AFI Region

That, low level flight information be implemented in the AFI region where required by the users.

3.3 The Task Force recalled that SIGMET warning is of the highest priority among other types of meteorological information provided to the aviation users and that Annex 3 provides that SIGMET information shall be issued by a meteorological watch office (MWO) and also recommends that SIGMET messages concerning volcanic ash cloud and tropical cyclones should be based on advisory information provided by VAAC, Toulouse, and TCAC, Re union, respectively. VAAC, Toulouse and TCAC, Reunion are designated by regional air navigation agreement.

3.4 The meeting recalled that, following concerns raised by users, the MET Divisional Meeting (2002) formulated recommendation 1/12 b), urging for periodic tests of SIGMET messages to be conducted.

3.5 The Task Force meeting was informed that the seventh meeting of the International Airways Volcanic Watch Operations Group (IAVWOPSG/7), held from 18 to 22 March, 2013 in ICAO APAC office discussed amongst other things, issues relating to the development of the IAVW in order to meet evolving operational requirements including the possibility of replacing VA SIGMET) by advisory information in alphanumeric and graphical formats (VAA/VAG).

3.6 Regarding SIGMET information for large, complex volcanic ash events, the group evaluated the options for depiction of SIGMET for volcanic ash in graphical format and noted that not all meteorological watch offices (MWOs) were in a position to provide a graphical SIGMET. As such, users would need to be aware of those MWOs that are able to support this capability. It was also noted that the challenge for the MWOs would be to translate complex information from VAACs into a textual message (SIGMET information) if they were not able to provide a complex graphical product for the SIGMET. It was further noted that, if a complex graphical SIGMET was translated into a few coordinates to become the text SIGMET, all users of the SIGMET information would benefit from the strengths of each product. It was then agreed that, through appropriate training material, users could be advised of the two messages and an ad-hoc working group was constituted to develop guidance material to be included in the *Manual of aeronautical Meteorological Practices* (DOC 8896).

3.7 The Task Force reviewed the report of the SIGMET tests conducted in November 2012, for tropical cyclone (TC), volcanic ash (VA) and for other weather phenomena (WS). The test report is attached at **Appendix 3A** to this report. The Task Force was pleased to note that there had been an

increased level of participation by States in the tests and improvements relating to issuance, dissemination and formatting of SIGMETs. The report also shows that, in 2012, 37% of the MWOs have never issued SIGMET whereas the figure for 2011 was 51%, an improvement of 14%. The Task Force noted that the positive impact could have been as a result of a SIGMET training conducted in September 2012.

3.8 The Task Force was reminded that France had accepted, by regional air navigation agreement, the responsibility for providing a VAAC within the framework of the international airways volcano watch. The Task force learned that VAAC Toulouse was operated by the aviation weather department which was part of the National Forecast Centre of Meteo France in Toulouse and work in close collaboration with the Direction of Information Systems, for the information exchange aspects.

3.9 The Task Force was further informed that to improve the modeling of volcanic pollutants by MOCAGE, a better knowledge of the source term was necessary and that Meteo France had decided to create a network of LIDARs on the French Metropolitan area, in order to collect data on aerosols such as volcanic ash. The Task force was informed that from, June 2011 until May 2013, VAAC Toulouse issued 187 operational advisories both in text and graphical format and that:

3.10 The Task Force learned that between June 2011 and end of 2012, VAAC Toulouse issued 11 test/exercise advisories in text and 7 graphics for exercise purposes:

3.11 In addition, VAAC Toulouse issued 3 test/exercise advisories in text and 3 graphics in 2013 also for exercise purpose:

3.12 The Task Force was pleased to learn that the VAAC London and VAAC Toulouse are mutual backups.

Agenda Item 4: Review of regional guidance material on OPMET exchange**4.1 AFI Regional SIGMET Guide**

4.1.1 The task Force was pleased to note that APIRG/18 adopted the amended SIGMET Guide, given in **Appendix 4A**, through Decision 18/47.

4.2 AMBEX Scheme

4.2.3 The meeting recalled that the Core Team on AMBEX had been tasked to review the entire Handbook and report during MTF/6 meeting.

4.2.4 The Task Force was reminded that one objective of the AMBEX scheme was to ensure efficient and economical OPMET information exchange in the region AFI and with the other ICAO regions.

4.2.5 The Task Force noted that some discrepancy existed between the content of the OPMET bulletins of the AMBEX scheme and the user needs in the SADIS users Guide. The identified gaps included the following:

- Irregularities in the contents of bulletins transmitted by the NOCs to the BCCs;
- Non compilation by the BCC, of OPMET information received from NOCs (AOP and non AOP)
- Transmission of the individual bulletins from NOC to RODBs, IROGs and to WAFCs
- Some required data not included in the current AMBEX Handbook.

4.2.6 In considering these issues, the Task Force agreed to include this task to the tasks of the Core team on the AFI AMBEX Scheme.

4.2.7 The Task Force was briefed of the outcome of the 12th Air Navigation Conference (AN-Conf/12), held in Montreal, 19-30 November 2012. The task force was informed that the AN-Conf/12 recommended that the areas of applicability of the *Regional Air Navigation Plans* (ANPs) be aligned with those of the *Regional Supplementary Procedures*. . In this respect therefore, the current requirements for air navigation services and facilities of FIRs Alger (DAAA), Casablanca (GMMM), Tunis (DTTC) and Canary (GCCC) in the Africa-Indian Ocean (AFI) ANP (Doc 7474) were proposed to be transferred to the European (EUR) ANP (Doc 7754), and those for FIRs Cairo, Khartoum and Tripoli to Middle East (MID) ANP (AN-Conf/12 recommendation 6/11 refers). The Core Team on AMBEX was then tasked to include these changes on reviewing the AMBEX Handbook.

4.2.8 The Task Force reviewed the Dakar and Pretoria RODB AMBEX implementation reports and was pleased to note that many actions had been taken to improve on the implementation of the AMBEX scheme in accordance with Decisions and Conclusions of MTF, MET/SG and APIRG meetings.

4.2.9 Having considered the reports from the two AFI RODBs, the Task Force was of the opinion that it was important to have a template for reporting that will be used by the RODBs. In this regard, the Task Force formulated the following Decision;

Decision 5/04: Template for the AFI RODB Annual Implementation Status Reports

That, the template given in Appendix 4B to this report, be used by both Dakar and Pretoria RODB for their annual implementation status reports.

4.3 *Development of the AFI OPMET Data Base Catalogue*

4.3.1 The Task Force meeting recalled that Conclusion 19/46 of APIRG/18 Meeting had called for the OPMET data catalogue given in Appendix 4C to this report, to be expeditiously finalized and implemented by States in the AFI Region. The Task Force further recalled that Conclusion 17/59 of APIRG/17 meeting calls for the implementation of the interface control document (ICD) for AFI OPMET database access procedures.

4.3.2 The Task Force recalled METSG/10 Decision 10/10 which called for the finalization of AFI OPMET Data Catalogue by Dakar and Pretoria RODB managers and MTF Decision 4/12 requesting Both Dakar and Pretoria RODBs to finalize the AFI OPMET Data Catalogue using Appendix 1 to the SADIS User Guide and AFI FASID Table 1B.

4.3.3 The Meeting then reviewed the updated data catalogue proposed by the RODB Managers and formulated the following decision.

Decision 5 /06 AFI OPMET Data Catalogue

That,

- a) the finalized data catalogue given in the Appendix 4C to this paper be implemented by AFI RODBs**
- b) the Secretariat distribute to States and publish on the AFI website, the updated AFI ICD.**

4.4 *Review of OPMET Related FASID Tables*

4.4.1 The task force was informed that the SADIS/18 meeting held in Dakar, Senegal from 29 to 31 May 2013 recalled that the requirements by States and users for aerodrome routine meteorological reports (METAR), aerodrome special meteorological reports (SPECI) and aerodrome forecasts (TAF) to be broadcast on the SADIS were given in Annex 1 to the SADIS User Guide (SUG) which is extracted from the global OPMET data base maintained the ICAO Secretariat.

4.4.2 The meeting was further made aware that SADISOPSG/18 noted that variability of reception of OPMET information had been cause of adverse comments from users in the past. However, where such comments concern aerodromes not listed in Annex 1 of the SUG, the SADIS Provider State was not obliged to ensure that these aerodromes are available on the SADIS broadcast and also it could not be regarded as a deficiency on the State concerned with its production nor in respect of the dissemination of such information.

4.4.3 Recognizing the importance of OPMET information for users, and that States are required to provide, or have agreed to provide, the OPMET information from the AOP aerodromes or non-AOP aerodromes respectively listed in Annex 1 of the SUG, the SADISOPSG group concurred that regional OPMET bulletin exchange schemes that exist in all ICAO Regions (to a greater or lesser degree of maturity) should be aligned with the OPMET information requirements contained in Annex 1 of the SADIS User Guide and that, to this end, the regional OPMET bulletin/data management groups should ensure the availability of up-to-date regional processes and procedures to support implementation, including routing tables, monitoring, validation and documentation.

4.4.4 The meeting was also reminded that that all AOP aerodromes issue METAR and SPECI, as a minimum in the AFI Region, while the requirements for TAF were subject to formal regional air navigation (RAN) agreement, which is reflected in Table MET 1A of all the facilities and services implementation documents (FASID) of the regional air navigation plans.

4.4.5 The MTF was made aware of the fact that OPMET information from these

aerodromes could be included in Annex 1 of the SUG only if the State concerned has no objection to its distribution on the SADIS and with the understanding that States do not have any obligation of providing such data for non-international aerodromes.

4.4.6 The Task Force reviewed AFI FASID Table 1A and was pleased to note that the proposals made by the Democratic republic of Congo and the Republic of South Africa had been implemented as proposed by the two States.

4.5 *Report of the Core team of Experts on RODB back up procedures*

4.5.1 The Task force recalled that METSG/10 Decision 10/6 and APIRG Conclusion 10/7 called for the establishment of a Core Team of experts to develop back up procedures for the two AFI RODBs.

4.5.2 The task Force further recalled that the AFI OPMET MTF/4 meeting held in Pretoria, 10-11 September 2012, the Core Team of experts presented a set of procedures for adoption by the group. However, the meeting noted that there was a need for further investigation aimed at improving the backup procedures (AFI OPMET Decision 4/13 refers)

4.5.3 The task Force was informed of and appreciated the efforts taken by the core team to improve on the procedures. The efforts included contacting the World Area Forecast Centre (WAFC), London and the Regional OPMET Centre (ROC), Toulouse for information.

4.5.4 The Task Force was informed that having considered all options that existed in other regions, the Core Team agreed that the current backup practice between Brussels, Vienna and Toulouse would be suitable for implementation by the two AFI RODBs. In this regard the Task Force noted that such a practice would be cost effective as it would not require any additional resources and that the backup of the two AFI RODBs could be achieved by implementing measures as follows:

- a) Identical catalogue of bulletins to be implemented and maintained by both Dakar and Pretoria RODBs.
- b) Interface Control Document (ICD) should be implemented by both AFI RODBs. It can be noted that the ICD contains procedures for interrogation of OPMET databanks by users.
- c) The bulletin compiling centers (BCCs) and or AMBEX centers disseminate OPMET data to both Dakar and Pretoria using appropriate AFTN addresses.
- d) Conduct monitoring activities in order to ensure that the databanks contain same OPMET data at all times.
- e) A statement to be included in the ICD, AMBEX Handbook and RODB websites highlighting the fact that should one RODB be inaccessible, the same data can be queried via the other RODB. The statement should also include both the AFTN addresses of the two RODBs.

4.5.5 In order to further improve on back up procedures, the Task force formulated the following Decision:

Recommendation 05/05: Implementation of AFI RODB Back up Procedure

That, the AFI OPMET MTF coordinates the implementation of the following measures:

- a) **Dakar and Pretoria RODBs implement and maintained identical OPMET bulletins catalogue;**

- b) Dakar and Pretoria RODBs implement the AFI Interface Control Document (ICD); It is noted that the ICD contains procedures for interrogation of OPMET databanks by users.**
- c) The bulletin compiling centres (BCCs) disseminate OPMET data to both Dakar and Pretoria RODBs using appropriate AFTN headers;**
- d) Dakar and Pretoria RODBs conduct monitoring activities in order to ensure that the databanks contain a mirror image of OPMET data at all times; and**
- e) The MTF to include AFTN addresses of both RODBs in the AFI ICD..**

Agenda Item 5: Future developments

5.1 The Task Force recalled that ICAO's 12th Air Navigation Conference (AN-Conf/12) was held in Montréal, from 19 to 30 November 2012. The conference which was attended by a total of 1032 participants from 120 contracting States, addressed the latest version of the Global Air Navigation Plan. The plan draws heavily on the aviation system block upgrades that were introduced to the international community at the Global Air Navigation Industry Symposium (GANIS).

5.2 The purpose of the AN-Conf/12 was to gain consensus, obtain commitments and formulate recommendations aimed at achieving a harmonized global air navigation system for international civil aviation and optimizing the opportunities in technology and maturing work programmes toward common global objectives. The conference made fifty –six recommendations.

5.3 The task Force noted that enabling provisions had been introduced in amendment 76 to Annex 3 for OPMET (METAR/SPECI, TAF and SIGMET) information to enable their exchange on bilateral basis in the non-proprietary XML/GML, thus allowing service provision to be flexible, adoptable and ultimately interoperable with the system wide information management environment.

5.4 The Task Force was pleased to note that Recommendation 4/7 was on ASBU methodology associated to meteorological information, part of which, calls for it States to work together in the implementation of the ASBU methodology. In order to follow up with developments on ASBU related to Meteorology, the Task Force formulated the following decision:

Decision 5/06: Exchange of OPMET information in Digital format

That, the Secretariat liaise with the ICAO operations groups to follow-up on the developments regarding exchange of OPMET information in digital format including guidance material and report back during the AFI OPMET/M TF/7 meeting.

5.5 The Task Force was briefed on the meeting held in EUROCONTROL (Brussels, Belgium) on the preparation of effective migration from the representation of the OPMET (METAR, SPECI, TAF and SIGMET) data in the present alphanumeric format to the XML format.

5.6 A roadmap for the migration from the current alphanumeric OPMET format codes to the XML format for the period 2013 to 2019 was developed by the meeting in Brussels with the following stages:

- 2010 : endorsement of XML for OPMET by ANC;
- 2010 – 2012 : finalization of « code tables » for XML ;
- 2013 : enabling clauses to use XML in Annex 3 ;
- 2014 : endorsement of XML by the MET/AIM DIV Meeting ;
- 2016 –Recommended Practice
- 2019: mandatory use of XML in Annex 3. The long period of transition to accommodate developing countries.

5.7 The Task Force was pleased to note that ASECNA had developed an Action Plan for the implementation of the OPMET in the XML format with the following stages:

- 1) To implement the XML format in the RODB of Dakar in the third quarter 2014 according to the standard version which will be published by ICAO from November, 2013;

- 2) To make bilateral tests of exchange of the OPMET in the XML format with the Pretoria RODB and with the Toulouse IROG in October, 2014 then inform ICAO of the effective implementation of the XML format;
- 3) To extend the implementation of the OPMET alphanumeric in the XML format in the BCCs and NOCs of 17 members states of ASECNA ;
- 4) To exchange and coordinate with the neighboring non ASECNA centers (Kinshasa, Luanda, Monrovia, Lagos, etc.) on the modalities of exchange OPMET in the XML format.

5.8 The meeting then agreed that the transition plan be finalized after the MET Divisional meeting scheduled for 2014.

Agenda Item 6: Terms of reference, work programme and composition of the AFI OPMET MTF

6.1 The meeting recalled that the AFI OPMET MTF was established by Conclusion 16/54 of APIRG/16 meeting with terms of reference and composition as given in the **Appendix 6A** to this report. The Task Force held its fourth meeting in Pretoria, South Africa, from 10 to 11 September 2012. It then reviewed of its work programme as given in **Appendix 6B** to this report.

6.2 The Task Force noted that the composition of the MTF and its Terms of Reference shown in **Appendix 6A** is as described by APIRG during the establishment of the AFI OPMET MTF and recalled that the Terms of Reference reflect the overall tasks of the MTF and need to be revised only when major changes are introduced to the MTF programme. Furthermore, any change would have to be subject to a draft conclusion to be endorsed by APIRG. In this regard, the meeting agreed that there was no need to amend the terms of reference at the meeting.

6.3 The Task Force further recalled that Decision 2/1 called for measures to be taken when a member is unable to attend the MTF's meeting without notifying the Chairman and the ICAO AFI regional Offices. In this regard, the meeting reviewed and update the list of Members in **Appendix 6A**.

6.4 Having reviewed the draft work programme, the Task Force endorsed the changes proposed and formulated the following Decision:

Recommendation 5/07 — Future work programme of the MTF

That, the updated work programme of the AFI OPMET MTF as shown in Appendix 6B be adopted.

Agenda Item 7: Any Other Business

7.1 The meeting recalled that APIRG Decision 17/80 set the frequency on yearly basis and venues for the meetings on a rotational basis between Dakar and Pretoria RODB host cities. Having evaluated the activities of the two RODBs during its 4th meeting, the Task Force considered that the RODBs were now well established and running as expected and therefore it was no longer necessary to visit the RODBs during every MTF meeting. Therefore, through its Decision 4/17 the MTF decided to convene annual meeting on a rotational basis at the ICAO Regional Offices Dakar and Nairobi.

7.2 However some Member States expressed that the venue should be opened to any State willing to host the MTF meeting(s).

7.3 The meeting was informed that the next MET Division meeting will be held in Montreal in July 2014 and thus, the sixth meeting of the Task Force should be held thereafter in the fourth quarter of 2014. In this regard, the meeting formulated the following decision.

Decision 5/08: Venue and date of the AFI OPMET MTF Meetings

That,

- a) Any State willing to host MTF meeting should forward the proposal the Nairobi and Dakar ICAO Regional Offices. and**
- b) the MTF/6 meeting will be held in October 2014.**