

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response in Aviation (HADRA) Expert Group STRATEGY

Problem statement

In the aftermath of a natural disaster, time becomes the most critical variable. Aviation is the only mode of transport that can meet this time-sensitivity and constitutes a lifeline for the people and States affected for the arrival of life-saving equipment and humanitarian experts, after the first emergency response. However, international aviation stakeholders may not be prepared to accommodate a large number of flights and handle a large influx of humanitarian aid, in degraded infrastructure conditions. In addition, information flows between the aviation sector and humanitarian community are not always established to guarantee the optimized use of available airport capacity.

Preparedness training and testing set procedures for emergency response in airports often focus on aircraft related disaster, or facility damage, but do not always include natural disaster response. In the absence of adapted guidance and tools, and appropriate preparedness or anticipatory activities, humanitarian support would not be deployed on arrival in an optimized manner, affecting the short-term ability of an affected State to recover from the event and affecting the safety, efficiency and regularity of international aviation.

Mission

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response in Aviation (HADRA) Expert Group aims to improve the overall efficiency and resiliency of airports by enhancing disaster preparedness measures and response capability of the affected airport so that it could act as a critical hub for humanitarian aid.

Governance and Membership

The Expert Group is co-chaired by a representative from the humanitarian community and a representative from the aviation sector, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

Membership is open to States and partnership is open to stakeholders involved in the preparedness and response to natural disasters.

Challenges

The challenge is dual, as the high influx of relief traffic quickly exceeds the airport's already limited capacity and at the same time, the airport's infrastructure along with air traffic control systems may often be damaged and air operations disrupted in the aftermath of a disaster or simply inadequate, thereby limiting its capacity for the reception of humanitarian relief items and teams.

The interaction of a wide variety of actors with different mandates often leads to coordination and communication issues that are severely impacting the effectiveness of the humanitarian response. Meanwhile, unscheduled flights bringing non prioritized or unwanted items cause additional stress on the airport planning and operational infrastructure.

In addition valuable lessons from humanitarian response at the airport are not captured and disseminated, rendering iterative learning and improvement of processes harder to achieve. The limited fundamental academic research conducted on past experience prevents from identifying the areas, where knowledge would be needed to enhance the resilience of the aviation system and the efficiency of the disaster response.

Objective of the HADRA expert group

The objective of the HADRA expert group is to provide the tools and guidance of relevance to aviation and humanitarian stakeholders, so that disaster response mechanisms are enhanced. This objective can only be achieved if appropriate preparedness or anticipatory activities are designed and implemented in disaster-prone States. Ultimately, the activities of the expert group should incentivize the integration of airport preparedness in countries' disaster preparedness planning and other sectoral programmes of relevance, thus contributing to the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9 and 11).