



*International Civil Aviation Organization*

**ICAO New Flight Plan Format Study Group  
(INFPL SG)**

**Fourth Meeting  
(Cairo, Egypt, 27 – 29 February 2012)**

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**Agenda Item 4: Strategy and Plan for Implementation of INFPL in the MID Region**

**IDENTIFIED INFPL IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES**

*(Presented by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)*

**SUMMARY**

This Working Paper input to an INFPL 2012 implementation issue where guidance material has yet to be developed. The issue has a direct impact on the operations of the States involved due to the variance in the practices and procedures employed to those recommended in ICAO SARPS.

Action by the meeting is at paragraph 3.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 During the Joint ICAO/ACAC Seminar held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia 16-18 January 2012, it became evident that it may be necessary for one State to “convert” FPL and other ATS messages on behalf of another State. This situation was not envisaged when Amendment 1 was proposed and the initial Guidance Material issued.

1.2 This circumstance is not ideal however it is possible. Such an undertaking should only be done within a framework where the responsibilities are clearly defined and understood by all involved.

**2. DISCUSSION**

**Initiation**

2.1 There should be a formal letter of request from the State seeking assistance from another State to provide the ‘conversion’. The letter should provide an outline of the requirements including an estimate of the duration. At this stage, there is no need for detailed responsibilities to be included. This is the initial and formal request.

2.2 The State asked to provide the ‘conversion’ shall respond accordingly after having assessed the impact on its own system and operations:

2.3 The one area where there may be a possible operational problem to consider is if a diversion (message and/or circuit) is required and the delivery of the ‘converted’ messages is involved.

## Testing

2.4 Appropriate testing between the two Centers shall be conducted to ensure the conversion action is in accordance with INFPL 2012 Implementation Guidance Material and that the conversion meets the operational needs of the requesting Center. Testing should be conducted at least 2 months before the deadline of INFPL implementation in accordance with INFPL Transition Phase 3.

## Letter of Agreement (LOA ) or Letter of Understanding (LOU)

2.5 If the State asked to provide the ‘conversion’ responds in the affirmative to the request, a LOA/LOU shall be raised by that State.

2.6 A LOA/LOU shall and must be part of implementing such an arrangement as it is a difference to SARPS. The overall responsibilities must therefore be clearly understood and fully detailed in a written agreement.

2.7 The LOA/LOU should contain but not necessarily in the order or limited to the following:

1. The exact requirement – what is to be ‘converted’;
2. The responsibility of the Center requiring the ‘conversion’ to generate (originate) the ATS messages in the ‘NEW’ format;
3. Duration or expected duration of requirement;
4. Circuit, addressees etc involved;
5. The acceptance of responsibility by the recipient of possible erroneous data due to the conversion;  
(The Center providing the conversion not to be held responsible because additional data not immediately available due to the conversion.)
6. Responsibilities of the Center requesting the ‘conversion’ especially in notification to the other Center in regard to suspected ‘errors or omissions’;
7. Responsibility for the provision, if required, of a copy of a previously delivered ATS message to the recipient in its ‘original’ non-converted state; and  
(Would possible require an AFTN/AMHS delivery address where the message may be printed-out and use made of the data. The original text may need to be included in the text of a Service (SVC) message. Shall be spelt out in LOA.)
8. Actions required if message/circuit diversion is active.

2.8 The LOA/LOU should be agreed to and signed immediately following the completion of the testing, if successful, by individual staff representing the operational end user and other staff that may be involved at the recipient Center and operational staff representative of the ‘conversion’ function Center.

*Note: The wording here is to provide for the ‘variation’ of specialist staff delegated and responsible for such tasks at the various Centers, e.g. Air Traffic Control, Communications, AIS etc:*

2.9 A sample Letter of Agreement (LOA), based on EUROCONTROL Doc. ASM.ET1.ST015 – Common Format, Cross-Border, Inter-Center Letter of Agreement, can be found at **Appendix A** to this Working Paper.

**3. ACTION BY THE MEETING**

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) consider the Working Paper and **Appendix A** to this Working Paper as part of its discussion on INFPL 2012 Implementation issues;
- b) review and comment on the use of the material and/or variations to it as basic guidance for States in the implementation of such practices and procedures outlined.

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## APPENDIX A

**Letter of Agreement**  
**between**  
**Center 'A' and Center 'B'**

### **Effective Date:**

#### **1. General**

##### **1.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this Letter of Agreement is to define the operational procedures to be applied between Center 'A' and Center 'B' for the relay and conversion by Center 'A' of ATS messages as listed below from 'NEW' to 'PRESENT' format.

These practices and procedures are supplementary to those specified in ICAO, EUROCONTROL and/or National documents.

The anticipated duration of this requirement is expected to be (*insert time period in months*) at which time and as coordinated, this LOA will become null and void and Center 'A' will relay the said ATS messages in 'NEW' format only.

##### **1.2 Operational Status**

Both Centers shall keep each other advised of any changes in the operational status of their respective message handling facilities including the conversion tool that may affect the procedures specified in this Letter of Agreement.

##### **1.3 Applicable Definitions**

###### **1.3.1 ATS Messages**

"For the purpose of this Letter of Agreement, ATS Messages are those messages defined in Amendment No.1 to ICAO Doc. 4444 that will be relayed through Center 'A' for delivery to Center 'B' and that will require 'conversion' from 'NEW' to 'PRESENT' format.

###### **1.3.2 'PRESENT' and 'NEW' Format**

"For the purpose of this letter of Agreement, 'PRESENT' format relates to the text layout and contents of ATS Messages as defined in ICAO Doc. 4444 up to the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012. 'NEW' format is the text layout and contents of ATS Messages proposed by Amendment No. 1 to ICAO Doc. 4444 and the only acceptable format on and after the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2012.

### 1.3.3 Converter

A software or combination hardware & software tool designed to convert specific ATS messages from the 'NEW' to 'PRESENT' format (and in some cases vice versa). The 'Converter' may be part of the Message Switching System or a separate stand-alone workstation and although the conversion shall be in accordance with ICAO Guidance material, the method/s employed to achieve this may vary between manufacturers.

### 1.3.4 Conversion Table

The ATS messages will, at the very minimum, be converted from 'NEW' to 'PRESENT' in accordance with the Conversion Table contained as an Appendices to the ICAO INFPL Implementation Guidelines. A copy of the Conversion Table is attached as an Appendix to this LOA.

## **2. Areas of Responsibility**

### **2.1 ATS Message Origination**

2.1.1 Center 'B' will be responsible for the transcription and transmission of FPL and other ATS messages in compliance with Amendment 1 to ICAO Doc. 4444 and will also be responsible for internal and local delivery of these messages.

2.1.2 Center 'A' will be responsible for the conversion from 'NEW' to 'PRESENT' format and transmission to Center 'B' of ATS message types listed below received from other Centers and normally relayed via Center 'A'.

### **2.2 ATS Message Types to be 'Converted'**

2.2.1 Center 'A' will convert the following ATS message types:

- Flight Plan (FPL)
- Modification (CHG)
- Cancellation (CNL)
- Delay (DLA) etc....

### **2.3 Conversion Responsibility**

2.3.1 It shall be understood and agreed by both parties that the conversion from 'NEW' to 'PRESENT' will be done by Center 'A' in accordance with the attached Conversion Tables which in themselves have been agreed by ICAO and States, the ultimate responsibility for the use of the converted data rests with the end user at Center 'B'.

## **3. Procedures**

### **3.1 Message Addresses to which Conversion shall Apply**

3.1.1 The conversion from ‘NEW’ to ‘PRESENT’ format by Center ‘A’ shall be applied to those ATS message types listed above and addressed to:

- *List here all applicable addressee indicators to which conversion shall apply.*

*Note: Para. 3.1 may be titled “Circuit to which Conversion shall Apply” – depending on the way the “Converter” system works, e.g. the converter may ‘convert’ all the appropriate ATS messages sent on a given circuit and the address/addressees contained on the message are irrelevant. In which case, the Circuit Identifiers may be more applicable than addresses.*

### **3.2 Normal Traffic Routing**

3.2.1 Center ‘A’ will route traffic to Center ‘B’ but will ‘convert’ the ATS messages as detailed above on behalf of Center ‘B’.

3.2.2 Center ‘B’ will route traffic to Center ‘A’ including the ATS messages as detailed above in ‘NEW’ format in accordance with Amendment 1 to ICAO Doc. 4444

### **3.3 Alternate Routing (for both sides)**

3.3.1 *(Detail here any Alternate Routing requirements – for example, Center ‘A’ and ‘B’ may have a circuit with Center ‘C’. Center ‘C’ may have a LOA to convert ATS messages for relay to Center ‘B’ under ‘normal’ traffic routing – therefore, it may not be necessary for Center ‘A’ to ‘convert’ the ATS messages when Alternate Routing is applied.)*

### **3.4 Errors or Omissions**

3.4.1 Center ‘B’ shall be responsible to act immediately to notify Center ‘A’ if it is suspected that converted data is/has been corrupted or becomes unusable.

3.4.2 Center ‘A’ shall be responsible for the provision to Center ‘B’, a copy in ‘NEW’ format of any ATS message that Center ‘B’ may require. This shall be requested by Center ‘B’ by use of Service (SVC) message and plain language text.

*Note 1: The address to be used may be inserted here.*

*Note 2: Automatic retrieval by Center ‘B’ will only result in the ‘converted’ message being rerun.*

3.4.3 The address to be used for delivery of the ATS message in ‘NEW’ format is:  
*(insert address/es).*

### **3.5 Contact Information**

Insert appropriate contact details – Center and Management telephone/fax/e-mail etc.

### **3.6 Distribution of procedures**

3.6.1 These procedures shall be promulgated to the operational staff concerned.

*Note: Insert here specific operational areas concerned according to 'local' requirements.*

#### **4. Revisions and Deviations**

##### **4.1 Revision of the Letter of Agreement**

The revision of the present Letter of Agreement requires the mutual consent of the signatory authorities.

##### **4.2 Revision of any attachment/s to the Letter of Agreement**

The revision of any attachment/s e.g. Annexes etc, requires the mutual consent of the authorities designated by the respective signatory authorities, normally the Heads of Communications.

##### **4.3 Temporary Deviations**

When necessary, the Duty Supervisors of the Communication Centers concerned may introduce, by mutual agreement and for a specified time period, temporary modifications to the procedures laid down in this Letter of Agreement.

##### **4.4 Incidental Deviations**

Instances may arise where incidental deviations for the procedures specified in this Letter of Agreement may become necessary. Under these circumstance, communications personnel are expected to exercise their best judgment to ensure the integrity of message traffic and the associated systems and network.

#### **5. Cancellation**

5.1 Cancellation of the present Letter of Agreement by mutual agreement of the respective Approving Authorities may take place at any time.

5.2 Cancellation of this Letter of Agreement by either Approving Authority is possible at any time, provided that the cancelling party declares its intention to cancel the Letter of Agreement with a minimum pre-notification time of [insert time] before the date the cancellation is to take effect.

#### **6. Interpretation and Settlement of Disputes**

6.1 Should any doubt or diverging views arise regarding the interpretation of any provision of the present Letter of Agreement, or in case of dispute regarding its application, the parties shall endeavor to reach a solution acceptable to both of them.

6.2 Should no agreement be reached, each of the parties shall refer to a higher level of its national aviation administration, to which the dispute shall be submitted for settlement.

#### **7. Validity**

This Letter of Agreement becomes effective [date].

Place, date

Place, date

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

[Name]

[Name]

[Center A]

[Center B]

**(\*\*As mentioned earlier, the signatories shall be representative of the areas responsible for the application of the procedures specified in this LOA)**

Attachment: A copy of the agreed ICAO Conversion Tables.

- END -