DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION-MIDDLE EAST REGION

Second Meeting (DGCA-MID/2)
(Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 20-22 May 2013)

Agenda Item 6: **Aviation Safety**

PROGRESS IN ADDRESSING THE SAFETY CONCERN OF
LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

Guided by Assembly Resolution A37-10: *Proficiency in the English language used for radiotelephony communications,* the Organization pursued efforts in support of the implementation of language proficiency requirements over the past triennium. It is recognized that the implementation of language provisions has been challenging, in part because of the wide variations in language testing quality and processes.

This paper provides a status report on the implementation of these provisions. It also provides information on the ICAO Aviation English Language Test Service (AELTS), through which ICAO assesses English language tests, and on a web-based training aid.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1   In March 2003, the Council adopted amendments to Annex 1 — *Personnel Licensing*, Annex 6 — *Operation of Aircraft*, Annex 11 — *Air Traffic Services,* requiring States to comply with the language proficiency rating scale (at Level 4 or above) by 5 March 2008. Provisions in Annex 10 — *Aeronautical Telecommunications* require the availability of English language at all stations on the ground serving designated airports and routes used by international air services.

1.2   The 36th Session of the Assembly adopted Resolution A36-11 to give States additional time to implement the language provisions if they were not in a position to comply by 5 March 2008. The flexibility given to States on the implementation of these Standards was further extended through the adoption of Resolution A37-10.

1.3   In January 2011, ICAO advised States that Assembly Resolution A37-10 called for two major actions: a) Member States that would not comply with the language proficiency requirements by 5 March 2011 were to send to ICAO their implementation plans, which were to be updated on a regular basis after March 2011 until full compliance was reached; and b) ICAO would verify that the implementation plans submitted by States were complete and included timelines and identifiable milestones to be used by ICAO's Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) Continuous Monitoring Approach.

1.4   Since March 2003, ICAO has transmitted ten State letters related to the ICAO language provisions; conducted two symposia, one technical seminar and numerous workshops; produced two editions of the *Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements* (Doc 9835), two Circulars, *Language Testing Criteria for Global Harmonization* (Circ 318) and *Guidelines for Aviation English Training Programmes* (Circ 323); and developed tools to support and progress implementation.

1.5   In adopting Resolutions A36-11 and A37-10, the Assembly provided States, airspace users, service providers and the aviation language training and testing industry five additional years to progress the implementation of the provisions. It was recognized during the ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements (LPRs) Technical Seminar conducted from 25 to 27 March 2013 that the aviation community has made substantial progress in implementing these safety critical provisions.

2.   **ICAO ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS SINCE THE 37TH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY**

2.1   In 2010, ICAO issued the second edition of the Doc 9835. This second edition included additional guidance for civil aviation authorities and test service providers on processes for testing candidates in accordance with the ICAO LPRs. In June 2011, ICAO added an interactive map at http://legacy.icao.int/fsix/lp.cfm based on the information provided by States. This map provides a world view of the status of implementation of the language proficiency requirements and allows users to access implementation plans or statements of compliance.

2.2   In October 2011, ICAO launched the Aviation English Language Test Service (AELTS). Through AELTS, tests are assessed against the language provisions in Annex 1 and in Doc 9835. Language proficiency testing is an unregulated as a global industry, and this lack of regulation has resulted in a great amount of variability in the approaches used and outcomes achieved. AELTS provides a means for the aviation language testing community to standardize and improve their practices. This ICAO service also provides a means to convey expert advice to States, airspace users and service providers concerning the availability of testing services that use procedures consistent with ICAO criteria.

2.3   In 2012, the Organization launched a new edition of the training aid *ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements – Rated Speech Samples*. The document, which was developed by the International Civil Aviation English Association (ICAEA) for ICAO, can be accessed at http://cfapp.icao.int/rssta/index.cfm and contains 52 speech samples that have undergone rigorous rating and validation processes. It can be used as a reference to standardize rating processes and as a basis for the initial and recurrent training of raters and examiners.

2.4   As of 3 January 2013, one hundred sixty-seven States had provided information concerning their status of implementation. Eighty-one States indicated compliance with the requirements; twenty-three States did not provide implementation plans or statements of compliance. Based on the data available on the ICAO integrated Safety Trend Analysis and Reporting System (iSTARS) secure portal at https://portal.icao.int/istars , the lack of effective implementation (LEI) for the protocol questions related to the language provisions is at 34.25 per cent. Given the low number of implementation plans provided by States over the last three years and the LEI score, it can be inferred that the challenges associated with the application of language provisions have diminished and that additional time for States to implement the provisions is no longer required.

3.   **ACTION BY THE MEETING**

3.1   The Meeting is invited to note the ICAO activities supporting the implementation of language proficiency requirements since the last Assembly.

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