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INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION

## ASSEMBLY – 35TH SESSION

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Agenda Item 19: Health and well-being of passengers and crews**

#### **HARMONIZED CONTINGENCY PHASED RESPONSE PLAN FOR COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

(Presented by Singapore)

##### **SUMMARY**

Appearing in 2003, the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS, spread rapidly along international air travel routes and caused devastating social and economic impact, particularly in Asia. Singapore, recognizes the need to minimise the social and economic devastation from the spread of SARS and other communicable diseases via air travel, and supports the adoption of a harmonized contingency phased response plan and the development of related ICAO guidance material.

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS, appeared in 2003 and spread quickly along international air travel routes. In view of the contagious nature of SARS, the World Health Organization (WHO) considered every country with an international airport as being potentially at risk of an outbreak. To contain the spread, the WHO issued SARS travel advice and recommended new measures, including a screening procedure to identify passengers with possible SARS symptoms departing from a SARS affected country. The WHO also collaborated with ICAO and IATA to develop new measures aimed at preventing the spread of SARS via air travel.

1.2 When the last known human-to-human transmission was broken on 5 July 2003, the virus had spread to 29 countries, infected 8,098 persons and caused 774 deaths. Asia suffered devastating social and economic impact. Published estimates of the economic cost of the outbreak ranged from US\$30 billion to US\$140 billion and the sectors that bore the brunt were the tourism and civil aviation sectors.

## **2. ICAO AIRPORT CONTINGENCY PHASED RESPONSE PLAN**

2.1 In June 2003, an international working group comprising of representatives from ICAO, IATA, WHO and Singapore met in Singapore to recommend anti-SARS protective measures for international airports. This was followed by an ICAO audit in July 2003 on Singapore Changi Airport and China's international airports in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong. All the airports were found to have implemented the eight ICAO recommended anti-SARS protective measures.

2.2 With the SARS situation under control, another international working group comprising representatives from ICAO, IATA, Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA), China and Singapore met in Singapore in November 2003 to develop a standard framework for a harmonized contingency phased response plan so that airports' responses to SARS and other communicable diseases that may evolve into a public health emergency of international concern would be consistent and commensurate with the threat level, as determined by WHO. Based on the eight ICAO recommended anti-SARS protective measures for airports, the harmonized contingency phased response plan covers various phases of the phased response system, including the specific triggers, training exercises, command, control and communication structures. The plan has been implemented by the international airports in China and Singapore.

2.3 The harmonized contingency phased response plan for airports was presented by ICAO at the IATA/WHO meeting in Geneva in November 2003. The meeting supported ICAO's inspection of the airport public health contingency capabilities in the SARS-affected areas. The phased response plan was also presented at the 12th session of the Facilitation Division (Cairo, Egypt, 22 March to 2 April 2004) by the Division Secretariat as well as China and Singapore. The Division agreed that there is a need for a harmonized contingency phased response plan against communicable diseases and the plan should be refined and published in ICAO guidance material.

2.4 To avoid the social and economic devastation from the spread of SARS or other communicable diseases via air travel, Singapore strongly supports the initiatives of ICAO to develop Standards and Recommended Practices for a harmonised contingency phased response plan for airports and the development of the corresponding ICAO guidance material. All Contracting States are therefore urged to support the actions proposed in the Secretariat working paper A35-WP/34.

## **3. ACTION BY THE ASSEMBLY**

3.1 The Assembly is invited to:

- a) note the work done to prevent the spread of SARS and other communicable diseases via air travel; and
- b) support the actions proposed in the Secretariat working paper A35-WP/34.