



**ASSEMBLY – 35TH SESSION**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Agenda Item 15: Environmental protection**

**PROBLEMS CAUSED BY NIGHT CURFEWS IN SOME PARTS OF THE WORLD**

(Presented by India)

**SUMMARY**

This paper presents the problems caused by night curfews in some parts of the world, which leads to restrictive air traffic handling capacity situations. Such restrictions, with increasing traffic volumes, result in air traffic congestion and imbalances in the utilization of aviation infrastructure. There is a need for revisiting the necessity of continuing with night curfews, to enable unrestricted availability of the airports and enhancing the capacity to meet the traffic demand without additions to infrastructure and compromises with safety procedures.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The provision of efficient and reliable air transport services is of vital economic importance. The existing practice of night curfew at airports in some regions of the world leads to traffic constraints and congestion. This situation has been compounded by national regulations of some of the countries to impose night curfews on air transport operations due to local environmental comfort. This restriction impacts adversely on the availability of slots at such airports. Moreover, it also creates problems in a large number of other countries, particularly the developing countries, as they are forced to handle a large volume of international scheduled operations during odd hours of night, causing severe imbalance in the utilization of their facilities. On one hand the airport infrastructure and the air navigation facilities face acute congestion during particular periods at night, on the other, for most of the daytime they remain grossly under utilized. The airspace also gets congested during the night hours, imposing strain on the air traffic control units.

The necessity of imposing night curfews arose because of poor town planning of airport cities. Many airports, which were located outside the cities, got surrounded by populated areas because cities were allowed to grow around airports without proper planning. For the comfort of a small population of people living around airports, restrictions have been imposed on operations from the airports causing problems and discomfort in other cities. Air travellers and the aviation community should not suffer because of improper planning of towns.

## 2. NIGHT CURFEW RELATED ISSUES

2.1 The need to introduce night operation curfews at certain airports was due to high noise levels caused by the aircraft of earlier designs compared to the present day aircraft noise levels, as they were meeting only the ICAO Chapter 2 noise requirements. The present day aircraft certified to the Chapter 3 requirements create much lower noise. Also aircraft entering the fleet today is typically 20dB quieter than aircraft of 30 years ago. This corresponds to 75% reduction in noise annoyance. The future aircraft engines are expected to generate even lesser noise levels.

2.2 The prevailing practice of night curfew at various airports in the world adversely impacts the air traffic handling capacity and airport infrastructure at other airports as well. Such restriction on air traffic operations create imbalances in handling capacities, skewed infrastructural requirements and operating procedures that may result in a compromise on safety and ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs). The night curfew restrictions not only restrict growth of air transport operations, but also cause inconvenience to the travelling public.

2.3 A large number of airports, which have to handle the ever-growing air traffic demands, are constrained by their national regulations on environment resulting in imposition of night curfews. Such restrictions on air traffic flows impact adversely the air traffic handling capacities at several other airports also. There is a need to review the continuation of the night curfew at aerodromes, thereby making the airport available all day around for operations. This would also result in optimum utilization of airport infrastructure at other airports, which are impacted by the imposition of night curfews at some other airports.

### 2.4 Demand for Night Flights

2.4.1 Airlines can only operate profitably if enough passengers or freight customers want to use their services at a price, which covers the cost. A number of other factors can influence customer choice, but perhaps the most important are convenience, which is really about the timing and frequency of flights. Availability of daytime capacity can also affect the demand for night flights. The economic importance of night flights is still primarily determined by their role in allowing efficient utilisation of aircraft by the airlines.

2.4.2 Night flights are often necessary to provide competitive levels of service. Long haul flights, which dominate the night period, generally cross several time zones and this limits their scheduling window and the scope for making connections with regional services at each end. More long-haul services are now able to complete their journeys non-stop, due to improvements in aircraft design or because they are able to follow more direct and shorter routings, or a combination of both.

2.5 In the light of the technological advancements and improvements achieved in the noise level, the operating restrictions imposed earlier on the grounds of higher noise level are no longer justified. It is, therefore, high time that these restrictions are reviewed and the night curfews are relaxed.

2.6 Considerable additional airport capacity would become available and the air traffic would be able to operate without much restrictions. The airport operating capacities would increase considerably without the need to create complex infrastructure or operating procedures.

3. **ACTION BY THE ASSEMBLY**

3.1 The Conference is invited to take note of the contents of the paper and resolve that:

- a) The night curfew for operation of air transport services imposed by some countries, which is causing slot constraints and thereby imbalance in the utilization of traffic rights, has become a hindrance in market access and the growth of air transport operations and hence should be removed;
- b) All decision makers should base their decisions on reliable investigations regarding the effects of night flight ban. All relevant parties should work together to achieve a balanced solution with the air traffic industry as well as for the people living close to the airport; and
- c) All States should follow strictly the ICAO SARPS and no State should impose standards unilaterally beyond the SARPS, which may adversely affect air transport operations of other States.

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