

International Civil Aviation Organization

North American, Central American and Caribbean Office (NACC)

**Seventh Central American Air Navigation Experts Working Group Meeting
(CA/ANE/WG/7)**

Ninth Central Caribbean Working Group Meeting (C/CAR/WG/9)

ICAO NACC Regional Office, Mexico City, Mexico, 5 to 9 March 2012

Agenda Item 3

Air Navigation Matters

3.3 Specific Developments in Air Navigation

- **SAR**

**ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL MARITIME RESCUE COORDINATION CENTERS
(MRCCs) IN CENTRAL AMERICA**

(Presented by United States)

SUMMARY

This paper informs States of the international project to establish regional Maritime Rescue Coordination Centers (MRCCs) in Central America, one on the Pacific and one on the Caribbean side. Discussion is provided on the possible need for future action on the national and regional level to facilitate consistency and cooperation between the States' aeronautical and maritime search and rescue services.

References:

- Annex 12 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chapter 2 Organization)

Strategic Objectives	<i>This information paper is related to Strategic Objective: Safety – Infrastructure Implementation.</i>
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1. Introduction

1.1 Under Annex 12 – Search and Rescue to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, Central American States established the search and rescue region (SRR) and its associated regional aeronautical rescue coordination center “RCC Central American”. This regional SAR system has been effectively operating for many years. The International Maritime Organization (IMO), following its success on the continent of Africa, has approved a Technical Cooperation project for the establishment of two Regional maritime rescue coordination centers (MRCCs) and five associated maritime rescue sub-centers (MRSCs) in Central America for search and rescue coordination purposes.

1.2 The global search and rescue system is established under ICAO and IMO conventions and implemented under standards and guidance documents published by each organization. Strong effort is made to ensure that each organization's SAR system is harmonized as much as possible with the other's system. This focus on harmonization is supported by their joint publishing of the International Aeronautical and Maritime SAR (IAMSAR) Manual and the annual meeting of the ICAO-IMO Joint Working Group on the Harmonization of Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue. For the planned IMO Technical Cooperation project to be successful, the Central American States will need to ensure full consideration is given to the existing aeronautical regional SAR system.

2. Discussion

2.1 The IMO has approved the concept outlined in Appendix A, the IMO paper “Establishment of Regional MRCCs in Central America”. Appendix A, page 3 provides specific discussion regarding Central America. As stated, the concept is for two regional maritime rescue coordination centers and five associated maritime rescue sub-centers. The seven countries concerned will be Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. The IMO has accepted the offer of Chile to provide the necessary assistance under its memorandum of understanding with IMO for the provision of Technical Co-operation for Latin American countries. The first step of the project, expected to start in early 2012, is a series of needs assessment and evaluation missions. Follow-up action would involve development of a relevant project proposal.

2.2 The establishment of a regional maritime search and rescue system in Central America can be a very positive step forward. However, implementation of such a system must fully consider the existing regional aeronautical SAR system. As stated in Annex 12 of the Convention, “2.1.5 Recommendation. – Contracting States should facilitate consistency and cooperation between their aeronautical and maritime search and rescue services.” Also, experience from similar efforts in other regions of the world has revealed common problems to anticipate and bad assumptions which could be made. Close cooperation between aeronautical and maritime SAR authorities will improve the opportunity for a well harmonized SAR service in Central America. This close cooperation will be able to address issues such as civil-military cooperation, aeronautical-maritime SAR authority cooperation, efficient internal coordination among the Central American RCCs, effective coordination with foreign RCCs so as to not lose the current working relationships, which site serves as the Cospas-Sarsat system SAR point of contact for distress beacon alerts, etc.

3. Conclusion

3.1 The Meeting is invited to note the information provided and to encourage the States to consider that future action may be needed on the national and regional level to facilitate consistency and cooperation between their aeronautical and maritime search and rescue services as well as with other international SAR services.

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MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE
89th session
Agenda item 13

MSC 89/13/1
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RADIOCOMMUNICATIONS AND SEARCH AND RESCUE

Establishment of Regional MRCCs in Central America

Note by the Secretariat

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This document requests the Committee's approval to develop a Technical Co-operation project for the establishment of two Regional MRCCs and five associated MRSCs in Central America for search and rescue coordination purposes

Strategic direction: 2

High-level action: 2.0.3

Planned output: No related provisions

Action to be taken: Paragraph 12

Related documents: C 93/11, C 93/WP.2; MSC 71/23; MSC 72/23; MSC 78/26; COMSAR 4/14 and COMSAR 5/INF.2

Background

1 The final link in the chain of sub-regional MRCCs around Africa's coast was completed on Thursday, 3 March 2011 with the signing, in the presence of representatives from Cape Verde, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Morocco and Senegal, of an *ad hoc* multi-lateral co-operative agreement on the North and West African sub-regional Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC), which established a new Regional MRCC in Morocco, with its associated sub-centres in the other participating countries.

2 This Morocco Regional MRCC, located 20 km from Rabat, is joining those already commissioned in Mombasa, Kenya, in 2006; in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2007; in Lagos, Nigeria, in 2008; and in Monrovia, Liberia, in 2009, each with its own network of associated sub-centres (MRSCs) thus securing search and rescue cover along the African coast of the Atlantic and Indian oceans.

3 The establishment of MRCC Rabat completes a process, which was initiated by the Conference on Search and Rescue and the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), convened in Florence, Italy in October 2000 (Florence Conference). The Florence Conference had recommended a regional approach to the provision of search and rescue services in western, southern and eastern parts of Africa at countries selected for their strategic location.

4 Resolution No.1, adopted by the 2000 Florence Conference, invited the African countries bordering the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, from Morocco to Somalia, anti-clockwise, as well as the nearby Atlantic and Indian Ocean Island States, to establish five sub-regional centres and 26 sub-centres to cover their entire coastline areas for search and rescue coordination purposes. The Conference envisaged that, in this manner, all the proposed centres could work co-operatively to provide search and rescue coverage in what had previously been identified as one of the areas suffering most from a lack of adequate SAR and GMDSS infrastructure.

International SAR Fund

5 MSC 78, in considering the follow up actions of the 2000 Florence Conference, and in particular resolution No.2 on the establishment of an International SAR Fund, expressed its appreciation to the African countries for their proactive measures taken in providing SAR facilities and services in their waters; and fully supported the need for the establishment of an International SAR Fund which should be used for promoting and expediting such important humanitarian activities and provide for the establishment and continuing maintenance of:

- a) those subregional MRCCs identified in resolution No.1 adopted by the Conference to coordinate SAR operations to assist persons in distress at sea in the waters of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans adjacent to the African coast;
- b) such further subregional MRCCs as may be required to serve the needs of persons in distress at sea in other waters of the world in which national SAR services may not be in a position to fully fulfil their obligations under the SAR and SOLAS Conventions;
- c) an effective global system for the distribution of distress alert data and appropriate operational information via publicly accessible or dedicated communications networks;
- d) databases for the operation of the GMDSS and SAR;
- e) the necessary professional and technical training resources needed to qualify on a continuing basis the personnel involved in SAR and related services; and
- f) other resources deemed necessary for the effective implementation of the Global SAR Plan.

6 The Council, at its ninety-third session, noted the information provided regarding the establishment of the International SAR Fund and invited potential donors to contribute generously, in order that the Organization might further assist developing countries to enhance their maritime search and rescue capability, with a view to the effective implementation of the Global SAR Plan.

Expansion of the regional concept

7 COMSAR 4 had endorsed the SAR Working Group's identification of East and West Africa and some parts of Asia and the Pacific, Central and South America and the Mediterranean region as being the areas mainly lacking SAR and GMDSS facilities. It had agreed that, in considering any action to be taken, priority should be given to the African regions first and to the other regions later in accordance with the outcome of the assessments. MSC 72 had endorsed this approach.

8 Following the establishment of the five Regional MRCCs in Africa and the ongoing work on the establishment of MRSCs in that region, the Secretariat has recently explored the possibilities to extend the implementation of the concept of the regional approach, of establishing Regional MRCCs and MRSCs, to other regions.

9 In analysing the regions lacking SAR and GMDSS Services, it became evident that the Central America region needed urgent attention. Although limited SAR and GMDSS Services are available in several countries in the region, no relevant information has been provided to the Organization for inclusion in the Global SAR Plan (SAR.8 circular) and the GMDSS Master Plan (GMDSS.1 circular). Furthermore, none of the seven countries concerned (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) have so far ratified the SAR Convention.

10 Should the Committee agree to the desirability of addressing the adequacy of an appropriate SAR infrastructure in Central America, as a first step would be the organization, preferably towards the latter part of 2011, of a series of needs assessment and evaluation missions on the availability of SAR and GMDSS facilities to all the seven afore-mentioned Central American countries concerned. Following these missions, a decision could be made on which two countries (one on the Pacific and one on the Caribbean side) should be hosting the Regional MRCC and which countries would need to establish associated MRSCs.

11 ITCP Funds available could be used for undertaking the proposed needs assessment and evaluation missions. Further follow-up action would involve development of a relevant project proposal including identification and mobilization of funds from the International SAR Fund for undertaking the resulting proposed technical assistance activities.

Action requested of the Committee

12 The Committee is invited to note the information provided and approve the development of a technical co-operation project aimed at the establishment of two Regional MRCCs and five associated MRSCs in Central America for search and rescue coordination purposes.