57th CONFERENCE OF
DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONS

Incheon, Republic of Korea
4 – 8 July 2022

AGENDA ITEM 3:   AVIATION SAFETY

THE ROLE OF APEX IN SAFETY IN
AERODROME CERTIFICATION

Presented by Airports Council International (ACI) Asia-Pacific

SUMMARY

APEX in Safety is a peer assessment program whereby voluntary aerodrome safety and operations professionals are invited to conduct safety reviews at ACI member airports based on ICAO SARPS and industry best practices. More than 100 airports worldwide have undergone such reviews since 2012. The reviews have proved helpful for airports to improve safety compliance. Through efforts led by ICAO with the support of ACI, some States now even use APEX as the steppingstone to set airports on the path to aerodrome certification. The conference is invited to note the safety benefits of APEX in Safety and encourage use of APEX as a tool to promote and support aerodrome certification and safety management for airports of all sizes especially in the context of the commitment for all APAC States to certify all international aerodromes by 2020 under Beijing Declaration 2018.

THE ROLE OF APEX IN SAFETY IN AERODROME CERTIFICATION

1.   **INTRODUCTION**

1.1   In 2012 ACI launched an aerodrome safety peer review program named Airport Excellence (APEX in its short form) in Safety in an effort to help its member airports improve safety by adopting industry best practices and complying with ICAO SARPS.

2.   **DISCUSSION**

2.1   **Background and Update on APEX in Safety Review**

2.1.1   APEX in Safety has already been presented at previous DGCA conferences and RASG-APAC meetings such as DGCA/56 and RASG-APAC/4. Only a brief description will be given here.

2.1.2   APEX in Safety is not an audit program. The review is done by voluntary "peers" of the airport concerned (the "host") which takes the initiative to ask for such a review.

2.1.3   The review usually takes one week. During this week, a team of assessors (the peers) review the procedures, e.g. SMS, wildlife hazard management and aerodrome manuals; the physical characteristics, e.g. taxiways, runways and aprons; and firefighting and emergency response capabilities.

2.1.4   At the end of the review, the host receives a report on observations made and recommendations therefore. The report is kept confidential and the host is not obliged to implement the recommendations.

2.1.5   The host will be charged a nominal administrative fee and the travelling expenses of the voluntary assessors who are not renumerated for their services.

2.1.6   To date more than 100 airports have hosted such reviews, including more than 20 in Asia-Pacific. A map indicating the locations can be viewed online here**.**

2.1.7   The COVID-19 pandemic, although somewhat easing now, has so far been largely restricting international travels. Reviews can now be done online but are understandably limited to reviews of documents such as SMS and aerodrome manuals. Nonetheless in the second quarter of 2022 ACI noted with encouragement that international borders were progressively reopening and as a result some onsite APEX in Safety review activities had resumed.

2.1.8   More details on the program can be found online at https://aci.aero/programs-and-services/apex/.

2.2   **The Role of APEX in Safety in Aerodrome Certification**

2.2.1   Many aerodrome operators who have undergone the review find it useful in identifying gaps and hence in facilitating compliance with national regulations, primarily because the review is not just about finding shortcomings but also providing practical recommendations and tips for rectifying the problems from the prospective of fellow safety compliance managers who have gone through a similar inspection process for certification.

2.2.2   Some regulators also find APEX in Safety facilitates aerodrome certification because operators having gone through the review have rectified most problems before the certification inspection. Some States now even use APEX as a condition for aerodrome certification.

2.2.3   To ensure a sufficient supply of qualified and competent assessors, ACI in collaboration with ICAO has developed the Airport Safety Professional (ASP) designation training program. More details on the ASP program can be viewed online here.

2.2.4   APEX in Safety is a recognized industry program referred to under SEI – 1 (Strategic collaboration with key aviation stakeholders to enhance safety in a coordinated manner) in Doc 10004: GASP 2020 – 2022. It should be highlighted that under Action Item DGCA/56/30 States and Administrations are encouraged to consider including APEX in Safety in their National Aviation Safety Plans.

2.2.5   Furthermore in the context of all APAC States having been committed to certifying all[1] international aerodromes by 2020 under the Beijing Declaration 2018, it would be sensible to continue to promote APEX in Safety, especially in States where some international aerodromes are still to be certified.

3.   **ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE**

3.1   The Conference is invited to:

a)   Note the safety benefits of APEX in Safety Peer Assessment program; and

b)   Consider urging States especially those which have not certified all of their international aerodromes to promote APEX in Safety, e.g. by including APEX in Safety in their National Aviation Safety Plans as per Action Item DGCA/56/30.

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1 As of June 2021, 89% of international aerodromes in APAC had been certified (AOP-SG/5).