

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

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AGENDA ITEM 3: AVIATION SAFETY

**GLOBAL COOPERATION AND EFFORTS TO SECURE
SAFETY FOR CIVIL AIRCRAFT IN CONFLICT ZONES**

Presented by Republic of Korea, endorsed by the SSCC

SUMMARY

This paper outlines the work of a global consultative committee, the Safer Skies Consultative Committee (SSCC), of which the Republic of Korea is a member. The SSCC was established after the downing of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 (PS752) in January 2020 to secure the safety of civil aircraft operating over or near conflict zones. The paper will also share some of the SSCC’s key achievement to date.

The SSCC is a global consultative committee, created under the banner of the ‘Safer Skies Initiative’ which was launched by Canada and unanimously endorsed by the ICAO in March 2020. The initiative seeks to enhance civil aviation safety over or near conflict zones. The SSCC has made progress in supporting the mechanisms for rapid information sharing in the civil aviation community, establishing guiding principles for airspace closure, and identifying strategies to mitigate civil aviation risks over or near conflict zones, and has shared these activities at the second Safer Skies Forum held in March 2022.

GLOBAL COOPERATION AND EFFORTS TO SECURE SAFETY FOR CIVIL AIRCRAFT IN CONFLICT ZONES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In response to the tragic downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (MH17) in July 2014, ICAO established a Task Force on Risks to Civil Aviation Rising from Conflict Zones and published the “Risk Assessment Manual for Civil Aircraft Operations over or Near Conflict Zones” (Doc.10084). Doc 10084 provides guidance for States and industry to mitigate the risk for civil aviation of flying over or near conflict zones (CZ).

1.2 However, following the tragic downing of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 (PS752) in January 2020, over Iran, Canada launched the “Safer Skies Initiative” to enhance the level of safety and security for commercial airlines travelling over or near conflict zones. The ICAO Council endorsed the “Safer Skies Initiative” in March 2020 and established a renewed work-programme to address the risks posed to civil aviation over it near conflict zones.

1.3 In parallel to these efforts, a number of regional and international initiatives were established to enhance the effectiveness of airspace risk management. European institutions, including ECAC and the European Union, the Expert Group on Risk Information Overflying Conflict Zones (EGRICZ), the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the Safer Skies Consultative Committee (SSCC), are among the key international groups driving this important work.

1.4 This Paper aims to introduce how the international community cooperated and endeavored in this regard, focusing on the activities of the SSCC, of which Republic of Korea is a member, to enhance the safety and security of civil aviation operations over or near conflict zone.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 In line with the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation and associated Annexes and Standards and Recommended Practices, States are required to keep under constant review the level and nature of threat to civil aviation within their territory and airspace, and to establish and implement policies and procedures to ensure safe and secure civil aviation operations within their airspace¹. This includes the publication of any necessary information via NOTAMs and other types of airspace publications. However, previous incidents, including the downings of MH17 and PS752, demonstrate that the existing measures related to aviation safety in CZ, such as information sharing and preemptive airspace closure among the Contracting States, are not consistently implemented.

2.2 While some states have established mitigation measures and strategies at the national level to enhance safety for civil aircraft operations over or near conflict zones, global implementation presents challenges as states have different systems and varying risk assessment methods.

2.3 Safer Skies Consultative Committee (SSCC)

2.3.1 The SSCC, established in July 2020, is an international consultative committee for discussions between states and industry on issues related to conflict zones. As part of the Safer Skies Initiative, the Committee addresses a wide range of issues, including information sharing, risk assessment methodologies, risk mitigation approaches, etc. The SSCC consists of member states, observers, international organizations, and expert group.

1. ICAO Annex 17 - *Security*, Amendment 18, Standards 3.1.3 and 3.1.5

2.3.2 Over the past two years, the SSCC has focused on supporting the mechanisms for rapid information sharing in the civil aviation community, establishing guidelines for airspace closure, and identifying strategies for mitigating civil aviation risks in CZ. Working papers on these topics were developed and shared with the international civil aviation community at the second Safer Skies Forum. The details are as follows.

2.3.2.1 **Mitigation Strategy Inventory:** The SSCC presented a mitigation strategy inventory at the March 2022 Safer Skies Forum. The inventory provides an as complete as possible list of mitigation measures that can be implemented by pilots, industries, states, ATC/ATS, and international organizations. It serves as an effective tool for stakeholders to strengthen risk mitigation measures in conflict zones.

2.3.2.2 **Guiding Principles for Airspace Closure:** The SSCC has developed guiding principles for 1) states experiencing heightened tensions and/or military activities which may present an increased risk to civil aviation; 2) airline operators flying or planning to fly in or over the affected conflict zones; and, 3) the State of Registry/State of Operators of aircraft deployed by those air operators.

2.3.2.3 **Rapid information sharing:** Accurate and timely information is essential for aircraft operators or states to perform effective risk assessments in advance and take necessary actions. Although there are existing tools for information sharing, such as NOTAM/AIC, exist, the SSCC determined that additional platforms are needed to share the information in real time between states and make it easy for aircraft operators to utilize it. The SSCC and IATA have proposed the IATA Tactical Operations Portal (ITOP) as an appropriate secondary method. The ITOP can be used immediately by states and airlines around the world through membership.

ITOP: In the event of any emerging conflicts en route or an escalation of conflict risk, airlines shall conduct a risk assessment and decide whether to continue their operations in accordance with the SARPs specified in the Annex to the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, but it is not easy to obtain information of the conflict zones swiftly. The initial ITOP was a collaborative communication platform for aircraft operators flying over North America, but it has recently been improved to be used as a global platform. ITOP is a non-profit platform and provides members with the ability to stay updated on information related to Airport, Airspace and CNS disruptions that may affect operations. ITOP also enables a real-time chat between all authorized users, encouraging them to join a chat to share information or mitigation strategy inventory and to better collaborate under any contingencies. It is offered as a benefit to IATA member airlines and has more than 1,900 subscribers, representing more than 120 airlines, airports, and Air Navigation Service Providers.

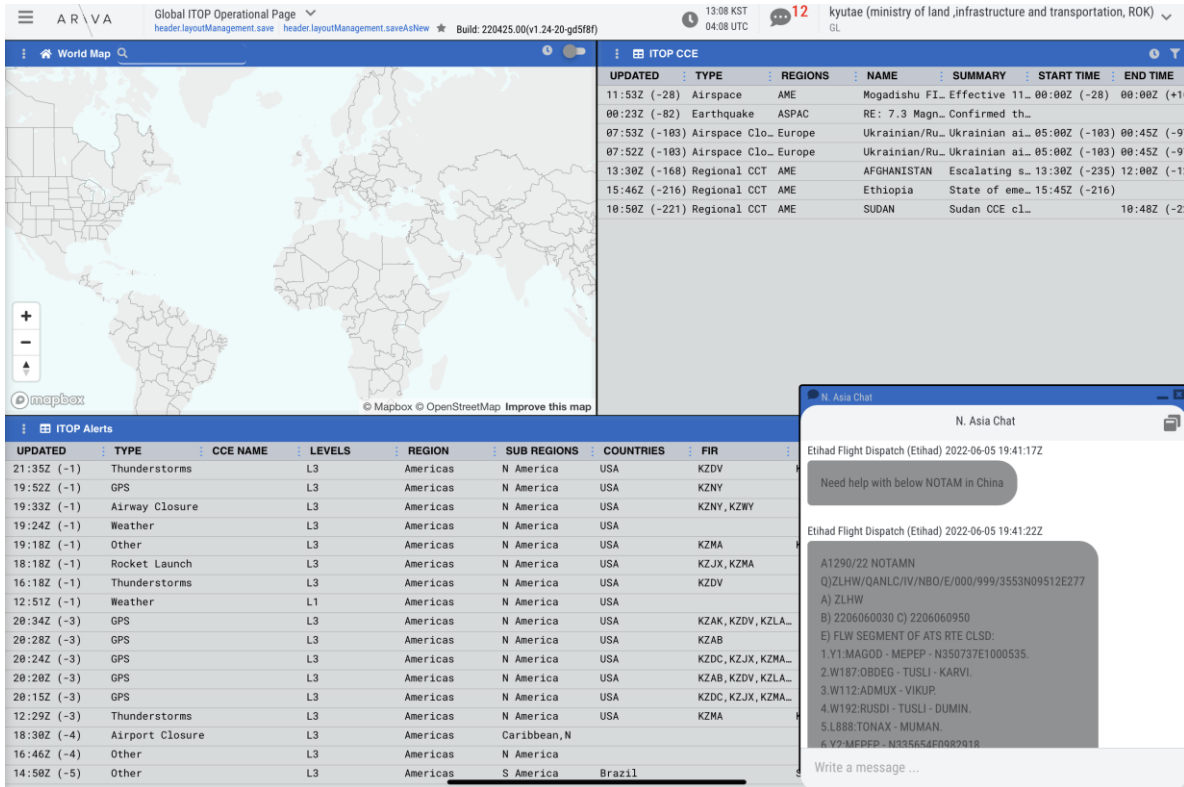


Fig. Global ITOP’s Operational Page

2.3.2.4 **Safer Skies Forum:** This annual event brings together experts from States, international organizations, and the civil aviation industry to: 1) share best practices regarding conflict zone risk mitigation; 2) enable information sharing and a broader dialogue between parties on current issues and way-forward; and, 3) advocate for the implementation of ICAO SARPs related to conflict zone overflight risk mitigation. For reference, the forum has been held twice so far in December 2020 and March 2022 respectively, and the third event will be held in June 2023 in the Netherlands in a hybrid format. Any stakeholders in the aviation sector may attend the forum without any restrictions

2.3.3 The SSCC promotes the precautionary principle as the most basic concept. Properly mitigating the risks CZ pose to civil aviation operations and making our skies safer requires global collaboration. The initiatives from the SSCC as presented in this paper directly contribute to this goal; however, they require global adherence in order to be effective. To this effect, SSCC will be seeking the prioritisation of the review of the current 2nd Edition of Doc 10084 at the 41st ICAO Assembly.

2.3.4 In addition, many airlines have joined the ITOP portal to share information, and it is expected that the global ITOP portal will be able to obtain aviation safety information around the world in the future. This effective information sharing platform can be used to hopefully prevent disasters, such as MH17 and PS752, by conducting a risk assessment with sufficient information and the "precautionary principle" on flying over and near conflict zones.

3. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

3.1 The Conference is invited to:

- a) Note the efforts of the international community, including the SSCC, to secure the safety of civil aviation over or near conflict zones.
- b) Encourage each member state to actively utilize the IATA's Global ITOP, an effective tool for the rapid exchange of aviation safety information in conflict zones
- c) Encourage states and the aviation industry to actively participate in the annual Safer Skies Forum to bring together national, international, and industry experts to share their best practices and expertise regarding civil aviation risk management in conflict zones.

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