

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

*Incheon, Republic of Korea
4 – 8 July 2022*

**AGENDA ITEM 8: TECHNICAL & REGIONAL
COOPERATION**

**STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR
RESTORATION OF AIR NETWORK WITH NO PACIFIC
COUNTRY LEFT BEHIND**

Presented by Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO) on behalf of PASO Member States
which consist of the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa,
Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu

SUMMARY

The Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO) recognizes that regional cooperation has proven to be beneficial for improving global aviation safety. Various regional safety oversight organization such as RSOOs, RAIOS and COSCAPs provide tangible improvements through support to States with PASO participating in the ICAO GASOS pilot assessments. Despite the continuous development of regional collaboration and support in advancing and strengthening cooperation, PASO still faces some specific challenges.

Pacific Aviation Ministers discussed the critical challenges and opportunities facing aviation across the region, which have been seriously impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including aviation safety and security performance. Ministers also endorsed the Framework for Aviation in the Pacific for strengthened regional collaboration to comply with ICAO standards and best practices.

Action by the Conference:

The Conference is invited to note the contents of this paper and the action at paragraph 3.1.

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR RESTORATION OF AIR NETWORK WITH NO PACIFIC COUNTRY LEFT BEHIND

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sustainable economic growth and development depends on a safe air transport sector. This provides a strategic opportunity to ensure that aviation safety and security oversight in the Pacific Islands attains the world's minimum safety and security standards.

1.2 At the Pacific Regional Aviation Ministers Meeting in June 2021, the Ministers recognized that PASO has made important gains in recent years with better governance arrangements and increase financial stability. The Ministers acknowledged that further enhancements can be made for PASO to ensure it delivers enhanced aviation safety and security services to all Member States.

1.3 Ministers also agreed that in the longer term, there should be a wider aviation-focused Regional Organization, to address aviation issues and opportunities, as a key regional priority, and that the core function of the Organization will be safety and security oversight, and over-time, a broader range of services and functions may be enabled in accordance with the Regional Aviation Strategy.

1.4 As part of the PASO Reform Project, PASO undertook significant reforms (to strengthen its legal standing, day to day operations, long term sustainability, and through the establishment of robust long term plans) in order to become efficient and effective RSOO. PASO will be capable of supporting and assisting the member States in meeting their contracted regulatory obligations by providing high standards of safety and security oversight and ongoing surveillance would provide a significant improvement to the safety of aviation in Member States.

1.5 In the Regional Aviation Ministers Meeting, Ministers agreed and called for enhancing PASO, expanding its scope and capacity. With this came the request to devise a new approach to funding an enhanced RSOO.

2. DISCUSSIONS

2.1 The Pacific Aviation Ministers agreed at the RAMM meeting to ensure that the aviation system is ready to play its part in the Pacific economic recovery, identify where funding is already being provided, and explore options for priority areas of funding including ensuring that the Organization (PASO) has a sustainable funding model that reflects the resourcing required to achieve the level of service and focus on priorities, as directed through the Regional Aviation Strategy.

2.2 PASO has commenced with the assessment of an Enhanced Regional Organization including reviewing and consolidating all available information on PASO and a Regional Safety Oversight Organization, establishing a comprehensive detail of financial options and economic case for process, pathways and preferred options to fund a sustainable enhanced regional organization, and establishing a regional platform for Pacific Island States engagement.

2.3 The desired funding model needs to support the new strategic direction and underpinning treaty guiding the development of aviation safety oversight in the Pacific region. The funding model must allow for diversity of service amongst members, whilst enabling the evolution of PASO and the future Regional Aviation Organization (RAO).

2.4 At the time of considering funding models, the Pacific continued to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic. Member states are experiencing increased fiscal constraints under the combination of reduced economic activity and increased demand for health services and business subsidy.

2.5 Pacific Islands States remain extremely vulnerable to economic shocks and natural disasters. The recent volcanic eruption in Tonga earlier this year provides a vivid example. It is an important consideration that any funding model also needs to allow for sudden changes in member priorities.

2.6 It is recognised that adoption of a significantly different funding model or approach will take much longer to develop and obtain support around. This also takes account of the likely timeline for implementing changes to the current Pacific Islands Civil Aviation Safety and Security Treaty (PICASST), either as amendments to the existing treaty or via agreement on a new treaty.

2.7 PASO participated in the GASOS pilot assessment in 2019 and this has proven beneficial to our improvement program. The objective set of criteria enables PASO to measure its own qualifications and capabilities to better serve our Member States in carrying out their State responsibilities.

2.8 PASO has engaged a GASOS Safety Advisor to support the PASO technical team in the review, elicitation, and documentation of the PASO technical requirements (both functional and non-functional). The purpose is to attract States confidence in PASO as the dependable and reliable RSOO to meet all its safety and security oversight obligations and aviation document holder's needs.

2.9 The goal is to strengthen and widen the PASO technical systems capacity, capability, and service offerings to attract, secure, manage and deliver for States those oversight functions they may wish PASO to provide for them under their Service Level agreements with PASO. Subsequently, PASO is supported in the delivery of its services for member states and its ongoing coordination of regulatory activities supporting the reform process of the Pacific Aviation Safety Office.

2.10 PASO is currently implementing its 2018-2022 Strategic Plan that builds on the work of the PASO Business Plan, as well as outlining more strategic initiatives. Additional support from The World Bank has allowed PASO to strengthen and improve its quality assurance systems, QMS and processes as part of the PASO Reform Project. Additionally work has already commenced on our new 10 year Strategic Plan, with approval to occur in Quarter 4 this year.

2.11 The "No Country Left Behind" initiative of ICAO has brought about a paradigm shift in their focus from striving for individual State excellence to a scenario where States and industry partners cooperate and collaborate to bring about collective improvements in safety and security standards. PASO furthermore, developed the Off-Site Certification Audit (OSCA) program to ensure that the States aviation systems continued to be audited even when borders closed and travel restricted.

2.12 Affordable and sustainable air services are critical to economic recovery post COVID-19 and Ministers noted that there are opportunities to encourage economic recovery of the region through aviation connectivity by establishing temporary arrangements with other like-minded nations that encourage air travel between nations, as an interim measure to help kick start economic recovery when border restrictions are lifted.

2.13 Recognising that States/Administrations within APAC region are facing similar safety challenges on their road to recovery, PASO encourages further coordination and mutual sharing of best practices between us that may be useful in supporting safe recovery. Those of us who are in the late stages of recovery can benefit from the sharing of experiences by other States/Administrations with ICAO APAC Regional Office playing an important role in coordinating regional effort to exchange ideas and practical guidance through the ICAO APAC COVID-19 Contingency and Recovery Planning Group (ACCRPG).

2.14 In recognition of these challenges, larger States around the Asia Pacific Region, including Australia and New Zealand, have provided financial and technical assistance to small Pacific States, most notably through support to PASO. Australia and New Zealand have recognized the challenges and channeled support to help Sates through

PASO. Further support will be required, including from ICAO, to help Pacific Island States to address these challenges.

2.15 Challenges in the Pacific have been felt more keenly as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. PSIDS are reliant on outside expertise provided by other States, and PASO. Closed borders have made it difficult for this expertise to be accessed, which have impacted on the ability for some States to provide effective regulatory oversight.

3. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

3.1 The Conference is invited to:

- a) Note the contents in this paper and importance with engaging with PASO on all regional matters in the Pacific, and when engaging with PASO Members on all shared priorities and needs;
- b) Consider ways for States/Administration in the ICAO APAC region to share best practices with PASO to support efforts towards a safe aviation recovery in the Pacific; and
- c) Consider providing appropriate assistance to PASO to further strengthen regional cooperation among the Pacific Island States in support of the ICAO “No Country Left Behind” initiative.

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