

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

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AGENDA ITEM 3: AVIATION SAFETY

**STRENGTHENING SAFETY FUNDAMENTALS AS THE
AVIATION SECTOR RAMPS UP OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT
OF AIR TRAVEL RECOVERY**

Presented by Singapore, and co-sponsored by Australia, Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Thailand, European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and International Air Transport Association (IATA)

SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the aviation sector in the Asia-Pacific region. The pandemic has also introduced new challenges and risks to aviation safety. As aviation operations ramp up, it is crucial that ICAO and States focus their efforts on strengthening safety fundamentals such as safety oversight and safety management capabilities, and pay greater attention to the implementation of the regional and global aviation safety priorities. These regional and global priorities include the implementation of safety enhancement initiatives developed under the Regional Aviation Safety Group – Asia Pacific (RASG-APAC), and the fulfilment of targets under the Asia-Pacific Regional Aviation Safety Plan (AP-RASP) and the 2018 Beijing Declaration commitments.

STRENGTHENING SAFETY FUNDAMENTALS AS THE AVIATION SECTOR RAMPS UP OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF AIR TRAVEL RECOVERY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 COVID-19 has decimated international air travel. Civil aviation authorities and the industry had to manage the disruption arising from the pandemic, in close consultation with public health authorities and other stakeholders, and had to make decisions about aviation needs and public health requirements. COVID-19 has also presented significant challenges and risks to aviation safety due to changes to the operating and business environments brought about by the pandemic.

1.2 It is crucial that the aviation sector maintains its attention on aviation safety as the region recovers from the pandemic to enable a smooth and safe ramp-up of aviation operations in support of air travel recovery and demand. This paper proposes that the aviation community works together and focuses on strengthening safety fundamentals such as safety oversight and safety management. This would entail prioritising efforts to implement the regional and global aviation safety priorities.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 International air travel is now on the path to recovery. However, this will present challenges to a battered aviation sector, where skilled personnel and resources may have in many cases been temporarily or permanently lost.

2.2 As aviation operations ramp up in the region, it is crucial that safety remains the foremost priority. The aviation sector needs to maintain and where appropriate strengthen safety fundamentals, building upon the significant investment over past decades to improve safety oversight and safety management capabilities.

2.3 Strengthening Safety Oversight

2.3.1 The APAC Annual Safety Report 2021 highlighted several safety risks related to COVID-19 that require attention. These risks include the loss of proficiency for flight crew and air traffic controllers, safety impact of degraded financial situation of aviation service providers, weakened safety management capabilities of aviation service providers, reduced airworthiness of aircraft under prolonged storage, and weakened safety oversight and surveillance capabilities. Furthermore, border and movement restrictions had led to reduction or disruption of safety oversight activities, even as some of the activities were performed via digital means. The pandemic had also strained the regulatory resources of most CAAs, which might have been diverted to cope with managing the impact of the pandemic.

2.3.2 It is therefore important for States to take stock of their safety oversight capabilities and ramp up or restore their safety oversight activities in tandem with aviation recovery, and focus on areas of greater safety concern. This would entail putting on track their plans for USOAP-CMA enhancements. In this regard, it would be timely for ICAO to fully resume the regular conduct of in-person activities under its USOAP CMA programme, to assist States in identifying areas that need improvements to strengthen their safety oversight capabilities.

2.4 Strengthening Safety Management

2.4.1 In the area of safety management, the pandemic has accentuated the need for effective implementation of safety management systems (SMS) within the aviation industry. The fundamentals of safety hazard and risk identification and mitigation cannot be over-emphasised as the industry manages their ramp up of operations in a safe and orderly manner.

2.4.2 States and industry must work closely together to identify and assess new or emerging safety issues to address aviation recovery, which is likely to be uneven across the region and between regions. Strong focus on SMS, backed by effective safety leadership and a positive safety culture, are essential to galvanise the aviation community to strengthen safety management.

2.4.3 In line with the ICAO Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP), States are encouraged to implement their State Safety Programme early to further strengthen their abilities to systematically address safety risks and continuously improve safety performance. As of the 11th RASG-APAC meeting in November 2021, five APAC States have fully implemented their State Safety Programme, while 16 others are making progress.

2.5 Strengthening Regional Cooperation

2.5.1 At the regional level, much work still needs to be done to achieve the goals and targets set out in the Asia-Pacific Regional Aviation Safety Plan (AP-RASP) and the safety-related targets of the 2018 Beijing Declaration. For example, as of June 2022, APAC's USOAP effective implementation of 63.62% remains below the global average of 69.54%¹. Timely implementation of the safety enhancement initiatives in the AP-RASP will help address safety risks identified by RASG-APAC and put the region on a firm footing in aviation safety.

2.5.2 RASG-APAC and its subsidiary bodies, in coordination with other regional sub-groups play a crucial role in steering the region in the implementation of the AP-RASP as well as the GASP. To support States' implementation, capacity building mechanisms such as the Cooperative Development of Operational Safety and Continuing Airworthiness Projects (COSCAPs) should be strengthened and mobilised, while States with the necessary capabilities can assist others in capacity building, training, and technical assistance.

3. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

3.1 The Conference is invited to:

- a) Encourage States to focus resources and efforts on strengthening their safety oversight in support of safe recovery of air travel;
- b) Encourage States to effectively implement State Safety Programmes in a timely manner, and to strengthen the implementation of safety management systems in their aviation industry;
- c) Urge States and industry to implement the safety enhancement initiatives and fulfil the targets contained within the Asia-Pacific Regional Aviation Safety Plan, including those in the 2018 Beijing Declaration; and
- d) Urge ICAO and States to implement and support regional capacity building efforts including under the RASG-APAC and its subsidiary bodies, and where relevant, the COSCAPs.

— END —

¹ Source: ICAO iSTARS