



International Civil Aviation Organization

MIDANPIRG/22 & RASG-MID/12 Meetings

(Doha, Qatar, 4 – 8 May 2025)

Agenda Item 2.2: ICAO Global and Regional Aviation Safety and Air Navigation developments (Plenary)

ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL SAFETY OVERSIGHT ORGANIZATION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICAN STATES (MENA RSOO)

(Presented by Saudi Arabia)

SUMMARY

This paper provides an overview of the establishment of the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) Regional Safety Oversight Organization (RSOO), as a coordinated initiative by the Arab Civil Aviation Organization (ACAO) and ICAO MID, which is currently spearheaded by Saudi Arabia. The primary objective of the MENA RSOO is to assist its Member States to develop and implement their State Safety Programme (SSP), and to provide assistance to enhance the safety oversight capabilities of States.

The paper highlights the progress made to this end, and the expected benefits from the establishment of the MENA RSOO, which will enable Member States to better position themselves to manage their resources and cater for future challenges in the context of civil aviation industry growth and sustainability.

Action by the meeting is in paragraph 4.

REFERENCE

- ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION A39-12: ICAO GLOBAL PLANNING FOR SAFETY AND AIR NAVIGATION;
- ICAO DOC 9734, SAFETY OVERSIGHT MANUAL PART B.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The ICAO Assembly Resolution A40-6 encourages Member States to foster the formation of regional or subregional partnership, to collaborate in the development of solutions to common problems, to build State safety oversight capability, and to participate in subregional and regional aviation safety and safety oversight bodies, including RSOOs. This resolution also directs ICAO Council to continue to partner with Member States, industry, and other aviation safety partners for coordinating and facilitating the provision of financial and technical assistance to States, subregional and regional safety and safety oversight bodies, including RSOOs, in order to enhance the level of safety and strengthen safety oversight capabilities.

1.2 The experience acquired from existing RSOOs indicates that this is an effective and sustainable regional arrangement for enhancing and strengthening Member States safety oversight capabilities. The RSOOs are effective in extending the level of cooperation to safety oversight by sharing objectives, strategies, and activities. Most importantly, the pooling of resources can attract, recruit and retain highly

qualified and experienced personnel.

2. BACKGROUND ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MENA RSOO

2.1 The DGCA-MID/1 meeting, held in March 2011, requested States to consider the use of a Regional Safety Oversight Organization (RSOO) as an efficient mechanism for, among other things the provision of appropriate training to technical staff and elimination of common deficiencies.

2.2 The ACAO EC/42 held in December 2012 and the DGCA-MID/2 meeting, held in May 2013, endorsed the draft strategy for the establishment of an RSOO, and agreed that ICAO supports ACAC (succeeded by ACAO) in conducting a study for its establishment.

2.3 The DGCA-MID/3 meeting, held in April 2015, endorsed the study conducted and supported the establishment of the MENA RSOO. Nine (9) States (Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Sudan) signed the relevant Letter of Intent (LoI) during the meeting.

2.4 The ACAO General Assembly GA/23 held in May 2016 and the DGCA-MID/4 meeting, held in October 2017, supported the proposal of Saudi Arabia, made during the RASG-MID/6, for hosting the MENA RSOO, and providing financial and technical support for the first two years of operation.

2.5 To advance the previous activities, the 1st MENA RSOO Steering Committee (DG level) was held in October 2018, in Riyadh - Saudi Arabia, back-to-back with the 4th MID Region Safety Summit. At this time, fifteen (15) States signed the Letter of Intent (LoI) related to the establishment of the MENA RSOO.

2.6 In 2019, Saudi Arabia established the MENA RSOO offices in Riyadh, and allocated 1.7million USD as an initial fund to start RSOO' activities, with the commitment to continue supporting this regional organization.

3 DISCUSSION

3.1 During the 2nd MENA RSOO Technical Committee meeting, held in Riyadh - Saudi Arabia, in February 2022, an updated draft of the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) for the establishment of the MENA RSOO was presented. The updated MoA addressed previous concerns and proposals of the MENA States to:

- a) Safeguard MENA RSOO's integrity, objectivity and efficiency by introducing transparent processes and procedures, clear roles and responsibilities, and a set of well-defined functions;
- b) Promote a sound and solid governance structure along the principles of ICAO Doc 9734-B;
- c) Ensure MENA RSOO's viability and longevity as a multinational Organization by defining a clear, fair and sustainable financial contribution scheme for its Member States; and
- d) Outlines a pay-scale that provides the best dividend in terms of attracting and retaining talented professionals, while keeping the MENA RSOO budget at acceptable levels.

3.2 The establishment of the MENA RSOO encompasses the following strategic objectives and functions, as defined in the aforementioned MoA:

- a) Enhance Member States' safety oversight capabilities by conducting on-site safety audits and inspections in the areas of Personnel Licensing (PEL), Flight Operations (OPS), Airworthiness (AIR), Aerodromes (AGA) and Air Navigation Services (ANS);
- b) Promote the harmonization of aviation regulations in the region and develop guidance material;
- c) Organize and conduct training, as requested/agreed by Member States;
- d) Undertake advisory/consultative work and carry out relevant activities to support the implementation of the State Safety Program (SSP), as requested/agreed by Member States; and
- e) Undertake, on request by Member States, advisory/consultative work in the critical area of aviation sustainability to facilitate and support Member States in the planning and implementation of environmental protection, including the ICAO CORSIA program and any other related objectives, standards or frameworks.

3.3 During the 2nd MENA RSOO Technical Committee meeting, described earlier, it was highlighted that:

- a) The budget of the MENA RSOO depends on a number of critical parameters, such as the total number of Member States involved, the number of functions and phasing of the MENA RSOO activation, the potential revenue streams from consulting services provided to Member States, and the intensity of the MENA RSOO annual work plan. In this context, an "indicative range" of the anticipated financial contribution by Member States for the first fiscal year(s) was presented based on information provided by ICAO 2021 document regarding RSOOs budgets.
- b) The subject of "in-kind" contribution was addressed to explore the intention of Member States to support the MENA RSOO with resources other than currency, which will be deducted from their annual financial contribution.
- c) A "pay scale," based on the existing UN/ICAO system, was presented and discussed for the MENA RSOO staff with the aim to incentivise talented professionals from Member States to join the MENA RSOO;
- d) A proposal for the selection of the MENA RSOO Managing Director was presented. It was recommended that the selection process is set on two steps as follows:
 - 1. Designation by the Chairperson for the first two years, and;
 - 2. Election process for the following tenures.

3.4 During the 2nd Steering Committee meeting (DG level) of the Member States held in May 2022 in Riyadh - Saudi Arabia, alongside the 1st Future Aviation Forum, as attended by 16 Member States and 2 Organizations, it was agreed to formally launch the MENA RSOO activities on the sideline of the 41st ICAO Assembly based on the outcomes of the 2nd Technical Committee meeting.

3.5 The MENA RSOO was formally established in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in December 2023 following an official signing ceremony by eight (8) countries on the sideline of the 15th ICAO Air Services Negotiation Event, whereby the President of the ICAO Council was the keynote speaker.

3.6 The new MENA RSOO premises were commissioned and physically delivered in December 2023, accommodated in a standalone area on the side of the new headquarters of the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA), in Riyadh. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia reaffirm the commitment for its financial and technical support for the first two years of operation.

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Additionally, the selection and appointment of the MENA RSOO Managing Director is currently under process.

4 ACTION BY THE MEETING

4.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) Take note of the information provided in this paper and encourage Member States to embrace the establishment of the MENA RSOO;
- b) The RASG is encouraged to enhance the regional cooperation in safety oversight and endorse it as the appropriate framework to address the rapid changes and growing complexity of civil aviation, which require significant additional resources to ensure the safety of aviation operations.

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