



International Civil Aviation Organization

**WORKING PAPER**

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**ASSEMBLY — 37TH SESSION**

**TECHNICAL COMMISSION**

**Agenda Item 46: Other issues to be considered by the Technical Commission**

**THE ROLE OF CIVIL AVIATION IN NATURAL DISASTERS**

(Presented by Colombia)

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This working invites the 37th Assembly of ICAO to assess the importance of designing and implementing regional State plans that set out the procedures to be followed by aviation sectors in the event of a natural or other disaster where civil aviation is crucial in transporting the injured, bringing relief and saving lives in affected areas.

**Action:** The Assembly is invited to:

- a) review this working paper and determine a working timeline to achieve the proposed objective;
- b) recommend to the Council of ICAO the incorporation of a chapter on the general principles of an aviation sector disaster response plan in the Global Air Navigation Plan and regional navigation plans; and
- c) consider the possibility of assigning the Regional Planning Groups (ALLPIRG) the task of developing the aviation sector disaster response plan and urge ICAO Member States to cooperate and assist in this initiative.

<i>Strategic Objectives</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Objective E: Continuity – Maintain the continuity of aviation operations. Point 2: Respond quickly and positively to mitigate the effect of natural or human events that may disrupt air navigation.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	The operational costs incurred should be covered by the disaster prevention and response services in each State.
<i>References:</i>	Basic Implementation Strategies set out in A37-W/1B-3, Appendix B.

\* Spanish version provided by Colombia.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The recent natural disasters which occurred in Chile, Haiti and China have shown that civil aviation is under immense pressure in its work to evacuate the injured and bring relief to disaster areas in States, often at times when the sector itself is experiencing logistical and operational failures.

1.2 There are presently no clearly established policies or priorities for emergency air operations.

1.3 Delays in the evacuation of the injured can significantly increase mortality rates, and operational efficiency in such situations is key to disaster mitigation.

1.4 Currently, scientific warnings are in effect alerting communities to the probability of disasters in the various regions of the world. For this reason, the aviation sector should establish regional and State operational and logistical response plans that are highly efficient.

1.5 It is very important to consider certain steps in preparing the aviation sector plan:

- a) assess the state of airport and air navigation infrastructure in the affected area after the event, so that airports are able to function in the best possible conditions in transporting the injured, providing emergency airlifts and bringing relief to disaster areas in a State;
- b) on airport premises, designate zones for aircraft parking, loading and unloading. Medevac aircraft in particular should be allotted dedicated zones at airports in view of their vital importance in the evacuation of the injured. To ensure smooth airport operations, mobile equipment such as navigation, communications and air traffic control units should be deployable;
- c) designate an alternate airport to be used for evacuation and/or arrivals of non-priority and/or non-affected passengers such as heads of State and victims' families;
- d) designate a point of emergency air traffic control and helipads (heliports) for the affected area, and establish emergency air traffic control procedures to limit operational risks; and
- e) draft emergency legislation including rules for the suspension of commercial flights and immediate clearance for domestic and foreign aircraft performing humanitarian work in the disaster area, and re-evaluate the pricing system in the emergency zone for efficient air operations.

1.6 Further, in the context of international cooperation, States should create an inventory of equipment and technologies that could be shared regionally as a form of development cooperation or under grants and/or sharing agreements, depending on the kinds of resources made available, the geographical location of the State and their specifications for use. For this purpose, technical and operational studies should be conducted for each region.

1.7 The intention is to establish effective procedures for coordination among States on the basis of operational agreements.

## 2. DISCUSSIONS

2.1 A chapter should be added to the *Global Air Navigation Plan* and to the regional and State plans on the development of an aviation sector disaster response plan. The ICAO Regional Offices would be responsible for advising States on the drafting and implementation of the plan. The State Coordination Plan should be considered for events involving two or more States, including follow-up and improvements.

2.2 Formal agreements between States are required that would allow quicker access for domestic and foreign aircraft performing humanitarian work in disaster areas. One principle to bear in mind is the exclusive control by the relevant State aviation authority of airspace that is demarcated for an emergency response. Therefore, procedures should be established for assigning priority to aircraft requesting clearance for landing and take-off in the emergency zone.

2.3 It is important to instruct the ALLPIRG to carry out the necessary work pursuant to the action proposed in this working paper.

2.4 The costs of this endeavour should be borne by the disaster prevention and response services in each State.

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