



International Civil Aviation Organization

## WORKING PAPER

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### ASSEMBLY — 36TH SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

#### Agenda Item 23: Increasing the effectiveness of ICAO

##### REPRESENTATION OF STATES ON THE ICAO COUNCIL BY MEMBERS OF A ROTATION GROUP

(Presented by Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland and Switzerland; ABIS Group<sup>1</sup>)

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper gives an overview of the present rotation groups seeking continued representation on the Council of ICAO and the rotation and coordination mechanisms using the ABIS Group as an example. It also outlines the benefits and challenges for its members and the International Civil Aviation Organization and encourages States, seeking membership on the ICAO Council, to create or join rotation groups.

**Action:** The Assembly is invited to

- a) note this paper; and
- b) encourage States seeking membership on the ICAO Council to create or join rotation groups

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to all Strategic Objectives
<i>Financial implications:</i>	No resources required
<i>References:</i>	There are no references in the ICAO Convention or Council decisions

<sup>1</sup> The ABIS Group actually represents the following six countries: Austria, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland and Switzerland. Portugal will join the ABIS Group as the seventh member in early 2008.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The objective of this paper is to inform States about the existing rotation groups in ICAO and their representation – by the Member State elected – in the ICAO bodies. Using the ABIS Group as an example, it describes the role of such a rotation group, the way it functions and explains the advantages as well as the limitations (in particular for smaller States being members of such a group) of participating in the work of the ICAO Council. Furthermore this paper intends to encourage States not represented on the ICAO Council to pursue the possibility of joining existing rotation groups or create new rotation groups.

1.2 It should be noted that presently over 60 States are represented by a Council Member who is a member of a rotation group, i.e. approximately one third of all ICAO Contracting States. The way of coordination and cooperation between States of each group may vary and reach from very close cooperation agreements to a loose formation. The ABIS Group, introduced in paragraph 3, represents a model based on a close cooperation.

## 2. EXISTING ROTATION GROUPS

2.1 At present, there are at least nine rotation groups officially established within ICAO:

- the ABIS Group (6 States)\*;
- the Nordic States (5 States)\*;
- the Central European Rotation Group (5 States)\*;
- the CARICOM States (12 States);
- the Maghreb States (3 States);
- the Central America and Panama Rotation Agreement (7 States);
- the Latin American Rotation Agreement (ARS, 6 States);
- the Venezuela-Colombia Rotation Group (2 States);
- the Southern African Development Community States (SADC, 14 States).

\* short descriptions of the three European rotation groups are provided in Attachment A.

## 3. THE ABIS GROUP

### 3.1 Background

The rotation group was founded in 1980 and today represents six European States: Austria, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland and Switzerland. The Civil Aviation Authorities of the six States cooperate closely with a view to fostering continued representation of the group through one of its members in the permanent bodies of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Common characteristics of these States are that their airspace is of the most heavily used in Europe; their main airports all cater to intercontinental air services and are the home base of major international airlines. This has led to the existence of a widespread expertise in aviation, but also a need to be proactive in international cooperation.

The ABIS Group is the fifth biggest contributor to the ICAO budget, paying a total of 5.2 per cent (2007).

The six States jointly finance the ABIS Montreal office that accommodates the actual Representative on the Council and the Member of the Air Navigation Commission. The office employs a permanent secretarial staff that ensures continued administrative support and facilitates the communication between the six States and ICAO. All the details regarding the rotation and coordination mechanism, role of the Council Representative and Air Navigation Commissioner and sharing of costs are set out in a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the six States.

### **3.2 The ABIS rotation and coordination mechanism**

3.2.1 Every three years at the Assembly the seat of the Group on the Council is rotated and the respective State seeks to become a member on the ICAO Council with the diplomatic support of the whole Group. A similar rotation principle applies to the ANC member, although the experts rotate in the middle of the triennium.

3.2.2 Coordination is provided on a regular basis before each Council session through coordination meetings in one of the ABIS States in order to formulate common positions for the ICAO Council and other relevant ICAO developments. During Council sessions, a more detailed coordination and consultation takes place via e-mail with the objective to represent the opinions of all six States. On specific issues, ad-hoc meetings with the appropriate experts are organised by one of the States, i.e. to exchange information on the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) and to support each other with preparation for an audit.

3.2.3 To facilitate coordination, each ABIS State has nominated a Liaison Officer who acts as contact point for the Council and ANC Member and who ensures distribution of information to experts in Civil Aviation Authorities.

3.2.4 After each Panel or Working Group meeting, the Council and ANC Member are briefed on the results by the participating ABIS expert to ensure up-to-date information.

3.2.5 The Council and ANC Member provide regular reports during Council sessions and a detailed report after each Council session on the results of meetings to all the six States.

### **3.3 Objectives of the ABIS Group**

3.3.1 The main objectives are the following:

- Representation of the ABIS States on the ICAO Council and ANC on a continued basis; exchanging information, conducting regular consultation and coordination of the points of view;
- Providing a wide range of expertise to ICAO Panels and Working Groups by proactive engagement of specialised experts;
- Supporting ICAO projects in order to improve safety, security and environment and contributing to the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) by seconding experienced auditors;

- Taking a proactive approach to ensure safety in developing countries by active engagement in the International Financial Facility for Aviation (IFFAS) and contribution to the “Assad Kotaite Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Fund”;
- Familiarising trainees from ABIS countries with the work of ICAO.

#### 4. **BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF ROTATION AND CLOSE COORDINATION**

4.1 Close coordination is a condition for continuity as the Council and ANC membership is rotated. It allows representing the views and opinions of a group of States on the ICAO Council and ANC and guarantees that continuity is ensured without disruptions or changes of positions taken so far.

4.2 Frequent and appropriate information to all members of a group allows for all States to participate in the work of ICAO on an equal basis, as none of the Members of the group should receive “preferential treatment”.

4.3 States of a group have different interests and means and may focus on different issues. However, as a member of a rotation group they can join their forces by covering different fields in ICAO. It is not only ICAO that profits from a wide range of expertise but also the States of the rotation group by exchange of expertise.

4.4 The creation of rotation groups enables, in particular smaller States, to strengthen their position in ICAO. Their financial contribution to ICAO needs to be compared with the contribution of single States and has to be recognised accordingly.

4.5 The formation of a group that works closely together in ICAO might also provide an opportunity for coordination in other fora where coalition building is crucial in the field of aviation (i.e. the African Union, European Union, etc.)

#### 5. **CONCLUSION**

5.1 Rotation groups can play an important role in ICAO. By close coordination, they provide for continuity of positions and ensure a wider range of expertise as several States participate more actively in the work of ICAO although they might not be represented on the Council. As a group represents several States, the exchange of information can be facilitated and the role of, in particular smaller States, can be strengthened. Due to the continuity of groups and their financial contribution, their status as a group needs to be better recognised in ICAO.

5.2 Since, in the future, more States may take an interest to actively participate in ICAO, States seeking membership on the ICAO Council should consider the possibility of creating a rotation group or joining existing groups.

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## ATTACHMENT A

### European rotation groups presently represented by one of their members on the ICAO Council:

- The **ABIS Group** represents the civil aviation authorities of six smaller European States (Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland and Switzerland) aiming at ensuring a continuous representation in ICAO bodies through the constitution of a rotation group. To achieve this goal, the partner States exchange information and, where possible, coordinate their points of view. The Member State of the ABIS Group is part of Tier II of the Council, i.e. States that make the largest contribution to the provision of facilities for air navigation. In 2008, Portugal will join the Group as the seventh member.

- The **Nordic States** have traditionally maintained a common Nordic Delegation to ICAO. At first, only Denmark, Norway and Sweden participated in this kind of cooperation, but it was later expanded to include also Finland and Iceland. Since the first election of the ICAO Council in 1947, a Nordic State has continually held a seat on the Council. Likewise, the Air Navigation Commission has always included a person from a Nordic State with the highest qualifications and experience. The Nordic candidatures for the Council and the ANC are based on a rotational scheme agreed by the Nordic Directors General of Civil Aviation.

- The **Central European Rotation Group** represents the Civil Aeronautical Authorities of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovak Republic and Slovenia. The group was created in 1993 with four members and later, in 2002, Slovenia joined the group. These States co-operate closely to enhance their chances of continued representation in the ICAO Council. The co-operation includes exchange of information, consultation and co-ordination on any ICAO matters. For the future, CERG intends to be more active in ICAO permanent or temporary bodies.

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