**Eighth Meeting of the North American, Central American and Caribbean Directors of Civil Aviation
(NACC/DCA/08)**
Ottawa, Canada, 31 July to 2 August 2018

Agenda Item 6: NAM/CAR Regional Safety/Air Navigation/Aviation Security/Facilitation Implementation Matters
6.3 Air Navigation Implementation Matters

FPL - REGIONAL HARMONIZATION AND BEST PRACTICES

(Presented by IATA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
This working paper presents a proposal for harmonization of FPL filling and processing procedures in the NACC Region.

Strategic Objectives:	• Safety
	• Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency

1.   **Introduction**

1.1   Fifth North American, Central American And Caribbean Working Group Meeting (NACC/WG/5 - Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 22-26 May 2017) formulated DECISION NACC/WG/5/4 PROCEDURE FOR HOMOGENEOUS ISSUANCE OF FLIGHT PLANS, with the objective of harmonize the procedures related to FPL fulfilment in the CAR and SAM Regions.

DECISION NACC/WG/5/4 PROCEDURE FOR HOMOGENEOUS ISSUANCE OF FLIGHT PLANS
 That, in order to reduce the causes of errors in flight plans, the Task Force AIDC develop a procedure for the homogeneous issuance of flight plans applicable for the NAM/CAR Regions with the goal of possibly including it in ICAO Doc 7030 - Regional Supplementary Procedures by 31 October 2017.

1.2   NACC/WG/5 Meeting discussed the ability of States to process flight plans was discussed, pointing out that the personnel is not always ideally trained, and that contributes to the error rate of flight plans. In this sense, COCESNA expressed that due to errors identified in the flight plans, regional training on FPL matters will be provided by COCESNA to Central American AIS/Air Traffic Services Reporting Office (ARO) office personnel. Curaçao and Dominican Republic have identified the need for training in the flight plan, with the common goal of minimizing regional errors in flight plans. Related to this issue, NACC/WG/5 formulated the following Decision:

DECISION NACC/WG/5/3 ARO REGIONAL TRAINING FOR FLIGHT PLANS

That, in order to support the mitigation actions to avoid the flight plan errors the ANI/WG AIM Task Force develop the standard Air Traffic Services Reporting Office FPL training requirements for regional training centres to serve as a basis for this training by 30 August 2017, based on ICAO Doc 7192- Training Manual AN/857, Part E-3.

1.3   The NAM/CAR Air Navigation Implementation Working Group (ANI/WG) Task Forces Meeting (AIM/FPL/AIDC/1 - Tegucigalpa, Honduras, 30 October‑3 November 2017) proposed and discussed a Flight Plan processing procedure, as described in the **Appendix A** to this working paper. In this procedure, airlines would send the flight plans to a designated address across all FIRs. This address would correspond to the unit or system in each FIR in charge of evaluating flight plans for syntactical or semantic errors, as needed. This unit will have the responsibility of sending the messages to the ATC centers, thus guaranteeing that only correct data gets to the control center. Depending on the technology available, the transfer of flight plan data to the ATC center after evaluation could be done automatically or semi-automatically by the systems responsible of processing flight plans. In the cases where this is not possible, the flight plan should be simultaneously sent to the ATC control centre. Thus agreed, the following draft decision was formulated:

DRAFT DECISION AIM/FPL/AIDC/6 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FLIGHT PLAN PROCESSING PROCEDURE

That, the States in the NAM/CAR Regions adopt the flight plan processing procedure described in Attachment 1 to this report, and propose its inclusion in the ICAO Doc 7030 - Regional Supplementary Procedures by the end of July 2018.

1.4   The AIDC Implementation Meeting in the NAM / CAR / SAM Regions (Lima, Peru, April 16-20, 2018) has established Recommendation AIDC/4, in which it requests that the States facilitate the reception of the ATS flight plan generated in the Operations Center of the airlines, to be transmitted to the FPL reception unit that has been designated in each State.

RECOMMENDATION AIDC/4 - Measures to optimise flight plan management

That NAM/CAR/SAM States, in coordination with IATA, and taking into account that airlines have automated the production of their operational flight plans, expedite reception of ATS flight plans generated by airline operation centres for transmission to the FPL reception unit designated by each State. Likewise, that States consider the benefits in terms of CO_2 reduction and assign high priority to removing the requirement to fill in the alternate aerodrome in the FPL of departure to airports in the United States, for airlines of that State that have been approved by their authority.

1.5   The aforementioned meeting has also formulated Recommendation AIDC/5, in which it urges the States to integrate mechanisms for validation and verification of the information in their databases, with a view to ensuring that the systems adequately manage their security alarms and the correct validation of flight plans.

RECOMMENDATION AIDC/5 - ATC database configuration

That NAM/CAR/SAM States apply mechanisms to validate and verify the information contained in the databases of their control centres and aeronautical messaging systems, taking into account AIP current data, ICAO standards, and changes to information addressing, in accordance with AMC tables, in order to allow systems to properly manage their security alarms and properly validate flight plans.

2.   **Discussion**

2.1   The discussions and conclusions of the NACC/WG/5 and AIM/FPL/AIDC/1 meetings, as well as numerous other meetings, aimed at identifying harmonized ways of solving the following presentation and processing problems of the FPL in the CAR / SAM Regions:

- Missing FPLs
- Wrong information in the FPL operational fields
- Duplicated/multiple FPLs
- Requirement of DEST ALTN as a mandatory field (for flights with destination to USA only)
- Lack of standardization when presenting FPLs due to different requirements across the NAM/CAR/SAM published in AIPs
  - paper format (in some cases mandatory and in others optional),
  - WEB,
  - AFTN/AMHS to only the departing ARO/AIS unit
  - ATFN/AMHS to all involved ATS units
  - A combination of some of previous points
  - Lack of standardization to process the FPL update messages (CHG, DLA, CNL) originated by the airlines AFTN addresses.
- Lack of training with feedback on errors founded in other ANSPs/Organizations
- Requirement of the transmission of item 19 of the FPL by AFTN or its sending by another means available (e-mail, paper, etc.).
- Changes to FPLs without notification to users
- No feedback to users of FPL acceptance or rejection

2.2   In this sense, a map and a spreadsheet is attached as **Appendix B** to this working paper, containing a preliminary analysis, based on the information known and/or compiled from the aeronautical publications (AIP and AIC) taking into account whether each CAR/SAM States complies with the following requirements, which could be considered as a basis for harmonization and modernization of the process of presentation and processing of flight plans in the CAR and SAM Regions:

P - Paper format only

A - FPL, CHG, CNL, DLA accepted via AFTN/AMHS

D - DEST ALTN not required if operator complies with annex 6 exception procedures

I - Item 19 not mandatory for all flights via AFTN/AMHS

F - Feedback provided by ANSP about message sent by operator

2.3   It is important to emphasize that investment in new equipment and/or systems is not necessary to comply with the requirements mentioned in the previous paragraph, taking into account that would suffice the implementation of more appropriate regulations and harmonized standard procedures, as well as their insertion in the regular aeronautical publications, particularly in the item ENR 1.10 and 1.11 of the AIP.

2.4   The objective would be to follow models already successfully applied in other regions, including best practices applied in the USA, Canada, among others, who delegate responsibility for originating FPLs (and their respective update messages). This delegation could be implemented on the basis of PANS ATM (Doc. 4444), 11.2.1.1.1 and Appendix 2 (2.1), in order to have a single source of information as well as a single procedure, such as so that any mitigation can have the same effect for all States.

2.5   Harmonization of the applicable procedures for the use of the DEST ALTN aerodrome is also sought, in accordance with PANS ATM Doc.4444, Appendix 3, following the exception specified in ICAO Annex 6, applicable only to flights from Latin America and the Caribbean to the US, where this exception can be applied.

2.6   Another important aspect is the recommendation not to request the transmission of item 19 of the flight plan and to develop a procedure to obtain it from the Airline Operations Control Center, if necessary. It is important to emphasize that these Centers operate 24/7 and can be contacted quickly and efficiently, without the need for the information in item 19 to be sent to the ATS services unnecessarily, generating workload for the ANSP and the airline.

2.7   The best international practices should be used, including some already adopted by the following States and International Organizations of the CAR / SAM Regions, such as:

a)   Costa Rica
b)   Cuba
c)   El Salvador (in process)
d)   Jamaica
e)   Mexico
f)   Republica Dominicana (in process)
g)   Trinidad y Tobago
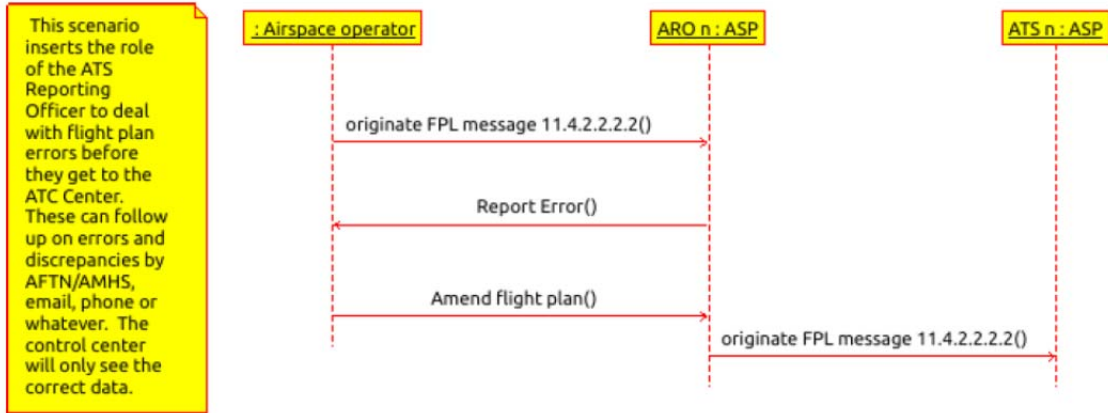h)   COCESNA

3.   **Suggested action**

   a)   Take note of the information contained in this working paper;
   b)   Request the NACC States to update the information in Appendix B, if necessary.
   c)   Establish an strategy to implement the recommendations AIDC/4 and AIDC/5, in order to harmonize the FPL filing and processing procedures in SAM for, inter alia:
      i.   Delegation to originate FPLs and their update messages.
      ii.   Harmonization of procedures to recognize the box corresponding to the DEST ALTN aerodrome as an optional data for those flights that depart from Latin America and the Caribbean to the US and that will apply to the exception described in ICAO Annex 6.
      iii. Recommendation regarding the need of compliance with Doc 4444 regarding no transmission of the FPL´s Item 19, as well as the establishment of a procedure in which the ATS contacts the Airline Operations Control Center, in case of need to obtain the information of the FPL´s Item 19.
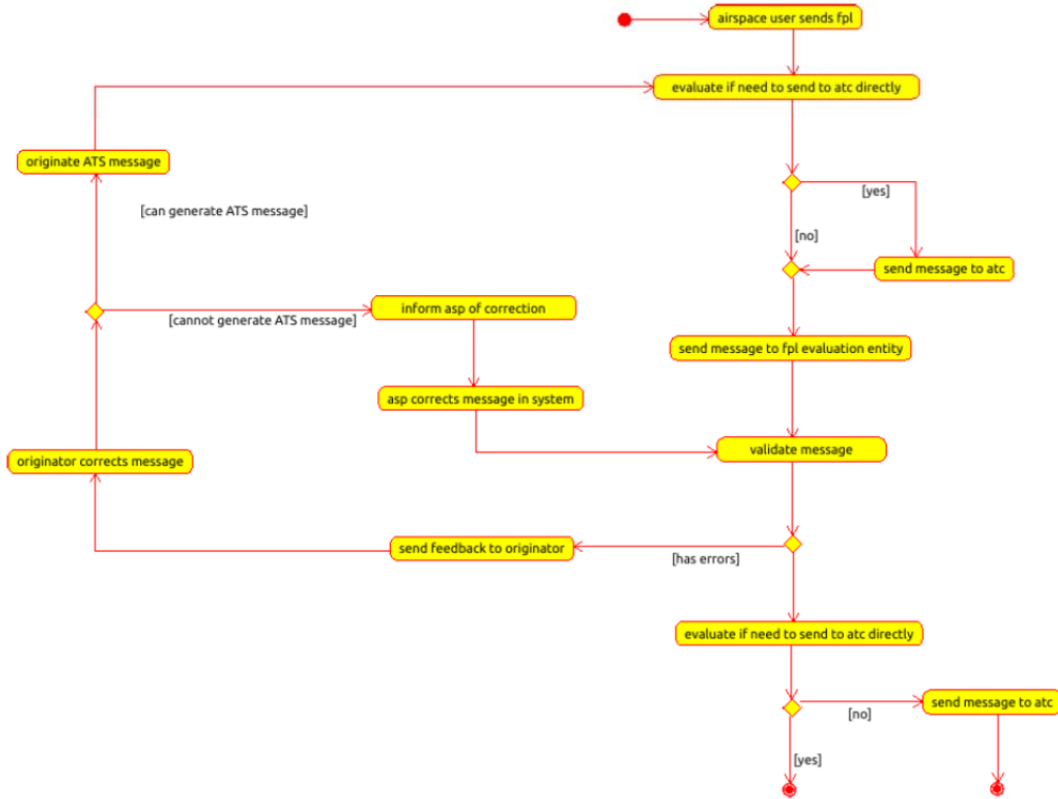   iv.   Feedback provided by ANSP about message sent by operator

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APPENDIX A

FPL Regional Procedure Proposal

High level diagram

This scenario inserts the role of the ATS Reporting Officer to deal with flight plan errors before they get to the ATC Center. These can follow up on errors and discrepancies by AFTN/AMHS, email, phone or whatever. The control center will only see the correct data.

: Airspace operator   ARO n : ASP   ATS n : ASP

originate FPL message 11.4.2.2.2.2()

Report Error()

Amend flight plan()

originate FPL message 11.4.2.2.2.2()

Detailed procedure

airspace user sends fpl

evaluate if need to send to atc directly

originate ATS message

[can generate ATS message]

[yes]

[no]

send message to atc

[cannot generate ATS message]   inform asp of correction

send message to fpl evaluation entity

asp corrects message in system

originator corrects message

validate message

send feedback to originator

[has errors]

evaluate if need to send to atc directly

[no]   send message to atc

[yes]

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APPENDIX B

Type of processes desired				
P - Paper format				
A - FPL, CHG, CNL, DLA accepted via AFTN/AMHS (not forwarding FPL)				
D - DEST ALTN not required if operator complies with annex 6 exception procedures				
I - Item 19 not mandatory for all flights via AFTN/AMHS				
F - Feedback provided by ANSP about message sent by operator				

Number of processes implmented				
4	3	2	1	0

Detailed process by NAM/CAR States

process	ANSP
AD	Aruba
P	Belize
ADIF	CENAMER
ADI	Costa Rica
ADIF	Cuba
ADIF	Dominican Republic
ADI	El Salvador
P	Haiti
P	Honduras
ADI	Jamaica
ADI	Mexico
p	Nicaragua
ADI	Trinidad and Tobago
ADIF	USA

— END —