



**Twenty-first Meeting of the CAR/SAM Regional Planning and Implementation Group  
 (GREPECAS/21)**

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 15 to 17 November 2023

**Agenda Item 3: Global and Regional Developments**  
**3.3 CAR/SAM Air Navigation Services (ANS) Implementation Level**

**SUPPORT TO ACHIEVE AERODROME CERTIFICATION**

(Presented by Airports Council International Latin America and Caribbean)

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	
<p>The certification of aerodromes, including the implementation of an effective Safety Management System (SMS) by the aerodrome operator, remains a challenge for certain States and aerodromes. The ACI APEX in Safety Programme strives to offer a flexible, collaborative and easily applicable solution based on the peer review concept of exchanging knowledge and information amongst experts, for States and Aerodrome Operators to move towards becoming certified. This programme, endorsed by ICAO, opens the opportunity for State CAAs to work with industry experts to identify the gaps in regulatory application or technical and operational challenges that may still need to be resolved to allow for an aerodrome to become certified.</p>	
<b>Action:</b>	Under paragraph 3.3
<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency</li> </ul>

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The certification of aerodromes, including the implementation of an effective Safety Management System (SMS) by the aerodrome operator as a core component of this process, remains a fundamental pillar of ensuring a safe and efficient aviation ecosystem. Nonetheless, for a range of reasons States and Aerodrome Operators still struggle to undergo this certification process, and in many cases can need support to move through the necessary steps moving them towards certification and SMS deployment.

1.2 The Airport Excellence (APEX) in Safety programme is ACI’s response to the industry’s call to action to improve aviation safety worldwide. It is designed to assist airports of all sizes with a goal to improve their level of safety and compliance with ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs). Since its formal inception in 2012, the programme has grown exponentially with a strong uptake by ACI Members in all regions of the globe, proving the value of this collaborative approach.

1.3 This voluntary programme provides a collaborative platform for Aerodrome Operators, and in some cases the State, to receive structured advice and support in creating a baseline for the certification process. The APEX in Safety applies a unique peer review methodology that improves an aerodrome's operational safety, promoting excellence through sharing of industry best practices and industry knowledge.

1.4 On a global level, ACI has conducted a total of 147 APEX in Safety peer reviews since the programme was launched with 42 having been conducted in the ICAO NACC and SAM regions.

## **2 Discussion**

2.1 The Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP) sets out a number of goals that States and industry should strive to attain. Beyond providing assistance to aerodrome operators and States in preparing an aerodrome for certification, the APEX in Safety Programme supports the following goals found in the GASP:

- a) Goal 2: Strengthen States' safety oversight capabilities;
- b) Goal 5: Expand the use of industry programmes and safety information sharing networks by service providers; and
- c) Goal 6: Ensure the appropriate infrastructure is available to support safe operations.

2.2 The key to the success of the APEX in Safety Programme has been the deployment of the community of airports to provide mutual assistance to drive safety improvements regardless of location, size, development or complexity. Through partnerships with ACI members, key stakeholders such as ICAO and governmental organizations including civil aviation authorities (CAAs), ACI has been able to respond to the challenge to improve operational safety.

2.3 The Programme is founded around the collaborative notion of a peer review, and is not an audit as such. In this context, airports are forthcoming about those areas where they have concerns and will actively seek advice on how they might improve. The value of the programme is its scalability and that it can be tailored to any airport to meet the general needs of compliance with the ICAO Annexes as well as address specific concerns that individual airports may have.

2.4 For each review ACI assembles a team of experts provided by other member airports and regulators on a friendly basis, who are able to systematically review the safety components at an airport over a period of, generally, one week. ACI then prepares a series of recommendations, which the airport can then use to correct or improve its safety infrastructure and procedures. The APEX team remains available to the host airport throughout the airport's implementation process of the action plan. As of 2016, ACI started conducting follow-up reviews at airports that previously received an APEX in Safety review.

2.5 In many cases, the CAAs are invited to join an APEX peer review as observers. In this capacity, the CAA inspectors have provided valuable input through their expertise in oversight and regulatory functions. In return they have benefited by receiving experience on daily operational safety aspects of airports along with networking with experts from around the world. In a rapidly growing and changing industry risk mitigation needs to be constantly assessed and regulatory oversight and integration with industry best practices are valuable. Other potential benefits for CAA inspectors who take part in reviews may include:

- a) understanding airport operator's practical conditions and challenges during the certification process;
- b) understanding of an airport operator's perspective on application of safety regulation with experts from around the world;
- c) understanding airport operator application of a risk-based approach, including mitigation measures; and
- d) participating in the challenges of implementing safety management systems (SMSs).

### **3 Conclusion**

3.1 Regional and international cooperation is the basis for an effective and comprehensive APEX in Safety review. The support of States is important in affirming the applicability and continuing the growth of the programme to support the application of and compliance with regulatory frameworks and strive to continuously improve the overall level of safety across the industry.

3.2 Airports which have received a review have found that their overall safety performance has improved when all stakeholders share experiences. They have equally found that closing the gaps on non-compliances or implementing effective Safety Management processes have benefited from the support of the programme.

3.3 The Conference is invited to:

- a) take note of the applicability of the APEX in Safety programme in ensuring aerodrome safety and supporting aerodromes and States to move towards certification of aerodromes.
- b) invite States to support the ACI APEX in Safety programme and encourage their national aerodrome operators to participate in the programme; and
- c) encourage States to see the benefits of APEX in Safety, providing peer to peer assistance to airports on operational safety management and facilitating compliance with regulations.