

AIR NAVIGATION SERVICES (ANS) AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**African ANSPs Meeting
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Agenda Item 4: Air Navigation Services (ANS) and the COVID-19 pandemic

4.2: *Partners perspectives*

- a) *Challenges and recovery Strategies*
- b) *Innovation and initiatives towards industry sustainable response*

Presented by:

AFCAC



Outline

- **Air Navigation Services (ANS) and the COVID-19 pandemic**
- **Challenges and recovery Strategies**
- **Innovation and initiatives towards industry sustainable response**



Air Navigation Services (ANS) and the COVID-19 pandemic

- ▶ The operational and financial impact of COVID-19 on the aviation industry is unprecedented. Air travel worldwide almost entirely stopped in April 2020. With air travellers regaining confidence and travel restrictions being eased, the aviation industry is seeing varying and changing traffic levels that are introducing new patterns of activity across the aviation supply chain. The operating and working environments continue to adapt to different factors, from uncertainty related to flight schedules to changing procedures and requirements imposed by governments and regulators. *(IATA et al 2021)*

Air Navigation Services (ANS) and the COVID-19 pandemic

- ▶ Shortly after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by WHO in 2020, AFCAC in collaboration with AUC, UNECA, RECs, ICAO, RSOOs, ACI, IATA, AFRAA and other key stakeholders established the High Level Task Force (HLTF) on COVID-19 response which recognized the importance of implementation of a comprehensive and coordinated continental approach to COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶ The HLTF Report recommended measures aimed at strengthening aviation public health, confidence among passengers, aviation workers and the general public, while minimizing negative operational and efficiency impacts.
- ▶ AFCAC and AUC invited the international financial institutions to provide support to the air transport industry in Africa including air navigation service providers.

Challenges and recovery Strategies

- ▶ Uniform application of COVID-19 mitigation measures would ensure quicker passenger confidence in air transport, health and safety for personnel manning air navigation service units.
- ▶ On the other hand high authorities of many States should be sensitized that uneven application of COVID-19 control and mitigation measures would not only dampen passenger propensity for air travel but also threaten the health and safety of air navigation services personnel.

Lessons learnt and Recovery from COVID-19

- ▶ As a result of COVID-19, the psychosocial climate in ANSPs and airline operators has been highly influenced by concerns about job uncertainty. These concerns have increased the levels of anxiety and stress among staff of airlines, ANSPs and the whole aviation supply chain. Increased levels of anxiety and stress could potentially negatively impact the psychosocial climate in both operational and non-operational functions, which can influence safety critical functions such as air traffic control and aircraft dispatch.

Lessons learnt and Recovery from COVID-19

- ▶ Peer support programs provide a useful tool in these conditions. These programs provide confidential peer based support and assistance where an aviation worker can discuss the challenges that they are facing with someone who understands their context. Such arrangements can be made available within the ANSP unit.

Lessons learnt and Recovery from COVID-19

- ▶ New stakeholders are now part of operational decision making and tactical strategies, e.g., health authorities. This has led to new interactions, new system interdependencies and additional levels of coordination. COVID-19 has also caused changes in staffing levels and working patterns which impacts on operational staff and negatively impact system capacity.

Challenges and recovery Strategies

- ▶ The extent of COVID-19 effects on cognitive abilities remains undetermined. However, preliminary indicators for a percentage of people who have been infected include a loss of taste and smell, loss of concentration and fatigue. There may also be possible risks around reduced organ function post COVID-19 infection. This will require stakeholders across the aviation system to constantly review guidance for their operational staff and return to work policies post infection, as new scientific evidence becomes available and is updated. (*Considerations for Navigating the Restart and Recovery of Air Traffic – IATA et al - 2021*)

Innovation and initiatives towards industry sustainable response

- AFCAC, RSOOs and the ICAO Regional Offices must continue to work on the modalities and development of detailed awareness programs for all stakeholders of aviation and establish monitoring mechanisms for the recommendations of the HLTF including capacity building for a resilient aviation sector for the sustainable development of air transport in our continent.
- AFCAC, RSOOs and ICAO Regional Offices should make follow-ups on the outcomes of the 2021 High-level Conference on COVID-19, which was an important moment for uniformization of mitigation measures and advocacy for adoption of a global approach.

Innovation and initiatives towards industry sustainable response

- **ANSPs should perform risk assessments, taking into account pandemic impacts of human performance.**
- **ANSPs should consider making available or extend appropriate resources and tools to minimize the mental health impact of COVID-19.**
- **ANSPs should educate operational staff on fitness for duty, self-care, and the availability of support programs. Where required, establish a fit for duty policy.**
- **ANSPs should raise awareness among leadership and management to support wellbeing for aviation personnel. Ensure sufficient safety promotion. Ensure dynamic shift and breaks/holiday scheduling to ensure physical and mental well-being.**



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Thank you

