



INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANISATION
WESTERN AND CENTRAL AFRICAN OFFICE

First Meeting of Directors General of Civil Aviation

(Abuja, Nigeria, 19-21 March 2002)

Agenda Item 1: Strategies for the elimination of deficiencies in the air navigation field in the AFI Region

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This paper informs the meeting of the deficiencies identified in the Search and Rescue field and actions geared towards the elimination of such deficiencies.

References:

- AFI/7 RAN Report
- APIRG/13 Report
- Annex 12 - Search and Rescue
- IAMSAR - Volumes 1, 2, 3

1. Introduction

1.1 Under Article 25 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation each Contracting State undertakes to provide measures of assistance to aircraft in distress in its territory and territorial waters as it may find practicable.

1.2 Any Contracting State which has accepted to shoulder responsibility in compliance with regional air navigation agreements by setting up a SAR Unit over parts of the high sea or territories of unlimited sovereignty shall see to it that such a unit is established and operated in accordance with Annex 12 provisions. Under such provisions, a State should set up a SAR organization, or take part in a SAR organization established by one or several other States.

2. Discussion

2.1 Based on what has been observed in many States, it appears that Search and Rescue Units have been treated as poor relation in air navigation systems; such units do not even exist in many African States. Yet, when all the arrangements have been made for a safe flight, there is still

fear that an aircraft and its passengers might experience some difficulties. It is incumbent upon

SAR to search and save human lives and goods. In this context, almost all States realize the importance of safeguarding human lives and the necessity to get directly involved in the system.

3. Discussion

3.1 In addition to safeguarding human lives and reducing suffering through rescue, States on the basis of their involvement in SAR Services, could yield other benefits, such as:

- a more secure and better managed environment for aviation-related industries, exchanges, spare time activities and travel;
- the availability of SAR resources often offers means for initial response and help whose importance is critical in saving human lives during the initial phases of natural or man-made disasters.
- well conducted SAR operations could bring positive publicity in situations which might have been considered negatively. However, the opposite is also true.

4. General outline of a search and rescue organization

4.1 The initiative to set up a SAR organization depends mostly on the structure in each State. From the operating viewpoint, there is however a great affinity between air traffic services (managed by the Civil Aviation Administration) and services used for search and rescue operations. In many countries, such a responsibility is quite often vested to the Civil Aviation Administration.

4.2 The main operational organ of a SAR Unit is the Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC). When it is not possible to establish a direct link between the RCC and existing means/resources in a given sector of a SRR due, for instance, to limited COM means, it could be necessary to set up a Rescue Secondary Centre (RSC). The latter is an subsidiary organ operating under the RCC authority.

4.3 The main alert means of a SAR Unit are the following: the air traffic services units, the designated alert post and Mission Control Centres (MCC) of the COSPAS-SARSAT system. The lessons learnt through such means are immediately conveyed to the RCC to decide on the proper action required.

4.4 As the administrative structure is not alike in each State, it is not possible to resort to a uniform pattern as regards SAR organization. The means available, the type and density of air traffic, the nature of the region to be covered are the major elements to be taken into account.

5. Cooperation between providers of necessary means for search and rescue and implementing and basic functions of a SAR System

5.1 It may be useful to establish national and regional committees in liaison with the

various means providers as members of such committees.

5.2 ICAO and IMO member States have been cooperating and advocated standards and recommendations to assist States in preventing and managing distress situations, and also foster international cooperation as well as daily coordination.

5.3 Any SAR system should be structured in such a way to discharge the following functions:

- receiving distress notifications, acknowledging receipt of such notifications and retransmitting them;
- coordinating SAR response;
- executing SAR operations.

6. Cooperation between States

6.1 Neighbouring States may deem it relevant to pool SAR resources with a view to limiting means to be implemented by each State and thus securing a broader coverage of the concerned regions.

6.2 In general, no SAR organization could be exclusively national given that a search area could overlap a region under another State's authority and at times it would be preferable that a neighbouring State be vested with the responsibility to conduct a SAR operation.

7. Problems encountered when implementing SAR operations In WACAF States

7.1 APIRG took into consideration the relevant recommendations of AFI/7 RAN meeting held at Abuja in 1997 concerning the upgrading of the SAR system and the elimination of deficiencies affecting that system. In that connexion, most of the deficiencies identified are as follows:

- lack of legal provisions governing SAR services;
- lack of equipment for efficient conduct of Search and Rescue operations;
- Whenever the equipment exists, it is inoperative when needed;
- lack of well trained and qualified personnel for the conduct of SAR operations;
- lack of Search and Rescue exercises;

8. Action by ICAO

8.1 ICAO realized that the implementation of most provisions in SAR field have been overlooked for a very long time. Search and Rescue units often need to extend their scope of action beyond national borders when searching for aircraft accident sites and for the purpose of saving survivals. The lack of SAR agreements between States was identified by APIRG as one of the major deficiencies which for a long time, was an impediment to the provision of efficient SAR services in the AFI Region. The situation was attributable to geopolitical problems (i.e. the sovereignty issue) which, for obvious reasons, would take time before their resolution.

8.2 ICAO has already organized Search and Rescue Seminars in the AFI Region. In this context, a Seminar was held in Dakar (Senegal) from 8 to 11 June 1993 and another at Abuja (Nigeria), from 7 to 9 December 1999.

8.3 ICAO endorses AFCAC's initiative aimed at implementing ICAO requirements within the framework of proposal to develop specific technical cooperation projects with a view to assisting States in eliminating identified deficiencies in SAR field in the AFI Region. AFI States were thus encouraged to get involved in these projects.

8.4 ICAO has already assisted States under the SAR Special Implementation Project in AFI Region (SAR/SIP) in 1986 approved by the ICAO Council on 26 June 1985 (115/13) pursuant to AFI/6 Recommendation 16/35.

9. **Suggested Action**

9.1 In the light of the foregoing, concerned States are urged to implement current ICAO provisions on:

- a) the need for coopeation among States in order to foster a more rational and economic use of SAR facilities and services;
- b) the necessity to train SAR personnel in sufficient number;
- c) the need to conduct search and rescue exercices on a regular basis;
- d) the need to install an earth station for users of Mission Control Centre (STUL/MCC) in the AFI Region at sites which will take the best advantage possible of satellite coverage to receive distress signals;
- e) the need to publish in corresponding AIPs, registration data for Emergency Locator Transmitters (ELT) which could be shared with Rescue Coordination Centres (RCC) of other States;
- f) the necessity to provide a SAR contact point (SPOC);
- g) the need for appropriate agreements and legislation; and
- h) the need to encourage familiarization visits to Rescue Coordination Centres and

Rescue Secondary Centres in order to make sure that their facilities and units do comply with the AFI Air Navigation Plan requirements.

10. **Action required**

10.1 The meeting is invited to:

- take note of the information supplied in this paper;
- urge States to eliminate the deficiencies identified in the Search and Rescue field.
