Annual Report on the ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation) Activities

Since the last meeting of IAIN Officers, the principal item on the ICAO Agenda has been the 36th (triennial) Assembly of Member States, Montreal 18-28th September 2007. The Assembly sets the work program, and agrees the budget for ICAO for the next 3 to 6 years. With the decline in the value of the US dollar, and increasing demands made on the Organization in the fields of Air Safety, Aviation Security, and Environmental Protection, ICAO has been facing a severe budget challenge. This is being met by internal reorganization, and refocus of resources to priority action programs against deliverables and performance standards, with reduced emphasis on the more traditional industry standard setting role.

Six Strategic Objectives drive the work for the period 2005-2010:
- Enhance global civil aviation safety;
- Enhance global civil aviation security
- Minimize the adverse effect of global civil aviation on the environment
- Enhance the efficiency of aviation operations
- Maintain the continuity of aviation operations
- Strengthen law governing international civil aviation

In the field of Air Safety, the Unified Strategy Program places emphasis on exposing and resolving non-compliance with agreed safety standards, and information sharing through the Flight Safety Information Exchange.

The regular mandatory Universal Safety Oversight Audit now takes a comprehensive systems approach to identifying safety deficiencies against the SARPS (Standards and Recommended Practices) in all the relevant Annexes to the Convention. All but 6 of the ICAO Member States audited under the USOAP have now consented to release of the audits conducted in their territory.

Protection of accident & incident records, and the safety data collection and processing systems, and the evolution of flight data recorders to keep pace with aircraft technology are key programs under the Global Aviation Safety Plan.

The Universal Security Audit Program continues to be a cornerstone of ICAO’s program to ensure that states and operators play their part in the protection of air travel from unlawful interference by auditing state compliance and capabilities.

In the constant battle against abuse of travel documents, the ICAO Public Key Directory is now operational. This central database enables a reconciliation of documents presented to immigration officials against a master list of Signer Certificates from issuing states that validate (or revoke) the document.

The airline industry faces many environmental challenges, and is under ever increasing scrutiny (and with it the threat of punitive regulation) as global awareness of climate change grows. ICAO has adopted a Balanced Approach to Noise Management; is addressing aircraft engine emissions, including market-based measures to reduce emissions, and is assessing the impact of aircraft noise and emissions and the models/tools currently under development.

In terms of Air Navigation, the focus is now on Performance Based Systems with defined targets and measurable outputs. The concept of performance is now being built into many of the ICAO programs. With the ever growing global hunger for radio frequency spectrum, ICAO were fully involved in defending the needs of the aviation industry at the triennial International Telecommunications Union World Radio Conference/07 in October.
A detailed report was provided in April of 2007 to IAIN on the ICAO Symposium on the Performance of the Air Navigation System (SPANS/07).

And on the world stage, with commercialization and globalization now topics for intense international debate, ICAO is seeking harmony amongst member states in the provision of airports and Air Navigation Services (ANS), uniformity and moderation in the imposition of user charges, taxes, economic oversight and multi-national ANS arrangements.

An important ICAO program for air safety suffered a setback, when a significant number of states proved unable to meet the established deadline for implementation of proficiency standards for pilots and air traffic controllers in aviation English. The deadline has since been deferred.

Looking ahead, the program of upcoming meetings includes an Air Transport Symposium in Nigeria at the end of April, a Worldwide Symposium on Enabling the Net-Centric Information Environment (June), a Workshop on Aviation Carbon Markets (June), a Conference on the Economics of Airports and Air Navigation Services (September), and a rare ‘Divisional’ (high level technical policy) meeting on Accident Investigation in October.

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