ICAO DELIVERS AGREEMENT ON GLOBAL AIRLINE FLIGHT TRACKING CAPABILITY

The ICAO, upon the completion of a Special Meeting on Global Flight Tracking of Aircraft held in Montreal on 14th May, forged consensus among its Member States and the international air transport industry sector on the near-term priority to track airline flights, no matter their global location or destination. Furthermore, the meeting established a framework for future efforts in this regard for the medium- and long-term.

Under the ICAO framework, contributions by industry through an Aircraft Tracking Task Force (ATTF) co-ordinated by the IATA will help address the near-term needs for flight tracking.

“Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 has been an unprecedented event for aviation and we have responded here in a similarly unprecedented manner,” commented ICAO Council President Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu. He continued, “While our flight safety work logically focuses the majority of our energy and resources on accident prevention, everyone in our sector also deeply sympathizes with the families of this lost aircraft’s passengers and crew.”

In parallel with IATA’s Task Force work, ICAO will begin developing a flight tracking concept of operations covering how the new tracking data gets shared, with whom, and under what circumstances. The UN aviation organization will also begin considering performance-based international standards, on a priority basis, to ensure broader adoption of airline flight tracking throughout the aviation system.

The meeting also recognized the challenges faced by States when co-ordinating their search and rescue (SAR) efforts across national and regional areas of responsibility, stressing the usefulness of regularly run practice exercises to identify procedural or operational gaps. The strong levels of international cooperation and resource sharing on the MH370 SAR efforts demonstrated to date were also recognized.

“Co-operation is the key to everything we achieve in global air transport,” stressed Aliu as he completed his introduction to the meeting’s concluding press conference. “This has been true since the first States came together and signed the Convention on International Civil Aviation seven decades ago in 1944, and it will remain true as we begin to address the doubling of traffic volumes projected for 2030.”

Experts continue to review data to define MH370 search zone
INMARSAT reported on 29th May that an expert satellite working group set up to support the search for missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 continues to review and refine the available data to determine where the aircraft most likely entered the water.

In a statement by the Australian-led Joint Agency Co-ordination Centre (JACC) confirming the end of the initial underwater search, it said the expert group is currently reviewing all existing information and analysis to define a search zone of up to 60,000 square kilometres along an arc in the southern Indian Ocean.

Findings of the review will be made public in due course, added the agency. The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) had earlier advised that the search in the vicinity of the acoustic detections made in early April could now be considered complete and in its professional judgement, the area could now be discounted as the final resting place of MH370, reported the JACC.