

**54th CONFERENCE OF
DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONS**

*Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
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AGENDA ITEM 3: AVIATION SAFETY AND
AIR NAVIGATION

AIRSPACE REORGANISATION IN THE PACIFIC

(Presented by Kiribati)

INFORMATION PAPER

SUMMARY

This paper presents information the upper airspace policy adopted by the Pacific Islands Forum following several studies examining the historic upper airspace organisation and proposes action by States to consider airspace reorganisation in accordance with that policy

AIRSPACE REORGANISATION IN THE PACIFIC

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is a political grouping of 16 independent and self-governing states. Members include Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Associate members include New Caledonia, Tokelau and French Polynesia. Current Forum Observers include: Wallis and Futuna, the Commonwealth, the United Nations, the Asian Development Bank, Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, the World Bank, the ACP Group, American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas and the International Organization for Migration with Timor Leste as Special Observer.

1.2 Following several independent studies and internal discussions, the Forum adopted a policy on upper airspace. This policy was included in the report of the Small Independent States Leaders Meeting on 7 September 2016. Subsequently, the issue was raised at the 65th General Assembly of the Association South Pacific Airlines in October 2016.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Based on the results and recommendations of several studies the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), has established a policy which envisages the establishment of a “Pacific FIR” overlying the SIS with airspace services being provided by a third party following a tender process. Although the PIF policy has been in place for a number of years and is supported by most regional and international airlines and several of the donor organisations, including the World Bank, there has been not concrete action to implement the policy.

2.2 On 7 September 2016, at the twenty sixth Smaller Island States Leaders Meeting, Leaders made the following decisions on air services agreements and upper airspace management. In particular:

‘Leaders acknowledged the importance of addressing the issue of greater management of the sovereign upper airspace, through collective management arrangements as a platform to ensure that access and equity of economic and other benefits accrue to respective SIS countries’.

2.3 The PIF Secretariat noted discussion on upper airspace management with respect to greater management through collective arrangements will also need to be progressed.

2.4 At the 10th Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders held in Honolulu in August 2016 Pacific Leaders urged the US Government to commit to dialogue with Pacific Island Countries under US-managed oceanic airspace to discuss arrangements to further recognise States’ airspace sovereignty and management.

Current Arrangements

2.5 The current arrangements for airspace overlying Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Kiribati are based on a 2003 consultant’s study and report by the Technical Cooperation Bureau (TCB). As the TCB report notes, the consultant did not consult with the smaller States during the 2003 activity. The report would also appear to have disregarded or failed to review at least two earlier studies, both of which recommended a different approach to the management of the upper airspace.

2.6 Under the current arrangements the airspace overlying Vanuatu, Tuvalu and approximately one third of Kiribati is assigned to the Nadi FIR and managed by the AFL Oceanic

centre in Nadi. The remaining two thirds overlying Kiribati are assigned to the Oakland FIR and managed by FAA from the Oakland Oceanic centre.

2.7 Based on the TCB report a proportion of the charges levied by Nadi for aircraft overflying Kiribati and other PIF Small Island States (SIS) is rebated to the respective governments. In several studies since this arrangement was put in place the quantum for this rebate has been considered inadequate for the SIS and recommendations made for a review.

Improving Efficiency and Reducing Costs

2.8 Several studies have been commissioned since the 2003 arrangements were implemented. Each of these has recommended review of the current arrangements and adoption of arrangements similar to the 1999 and 2001 studies undertaken and reported prior to the TCB consultancy in 2003. In essence, these recommendations are for the establishment of a single “Pacific FIR” encompassing the airspace overlying the SIS and the provision of airspace management by an ANSP chosen following a competitive international tender.

2.9 The establishment of a large FIR, rather than several smaller FIRs is consistent with the ICAO policy on improving airspace efficiency.

2.10 Current and planned future technology in oceanic surveillance and communication as well as ATM systems would enable provision of services in the proposed FIR in a more efficient manner than at present with a potential attendant reduction in costs.

2.11 By undertaking a competitive tender for the selection of the ANSP, prospective service providers would be encouraged to “sharpen the pencil” and look for synergistic cost effective options for service provision.

Methodology

2.12 In several of the reports from previous studies on the issue proposed airspace boundaries were proposed. These would serve as a starting point for current discussion and recommendations for change.

2.13 As the discussion and resolution covers several domains and the interests of several States and international organisations, it would be appropriate for a “one off” consideration by a team of technical experts in the form of a Taskforce. The terms of reference of the Taskforce should include:

- Review of previous reports on the issue,
- Consideration of revised airspace boundaries,
- Means of providing airspace management,
- Transition arrangements
- Scope for tender of airspace management services

The Taskforce should meet and report in time for a recommendation to the 2018 Air Navigation Conference.

3. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

3.1 The Conference is invited to:

- a) note the PIF policy on upper airspace arrangements;
- b) note the potential efficiency gains should the PIF policy be followed;
- c) discuss any relevant matters as appropriate; and

- d) propose to APANPIRG/28 that a Taskforce be established to examine the issues and make recommendations for airspace change to the 2018 Air Navigation Conference

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