



Symposium on Regional Aviation Safety Agencies

(GASR Focus area 5 – Regions)

(Livingstone, Zambia, 13-15 July 2009)

Highlights on the proceedings of the symposium

Theme 1. Introduction

All participants agreed that **safety oversight improvement needs** are **significant** in Africa, despite some encouraging recent improvements in safety records in the region. There was a consensus on the fact that **establishing RASAs is – at least – part of solution**. It was also commonly agreed that the establishment of RASA cannot be achieved via a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

Theme 2. Why do States create RASAs?

The Symposium concluded that different local circumstances could provide different justifications for the establishment of RASAs. Some elements, however, seem to be common to almost all regions:

- In several regions, economies of scale are the main driving force towards the regional approach. In Africa, more specifically, ICAO suggests – on the ground of economical and technical elements – that **most states cannot sustain on their own a satisfactory safety oversight system at national level**.
- Most participants recognised that the RASA approach offers significant added value in terms of **long-term sustainability** and **self sufficiency**.
- ICAO delegates stated that **ICAO supports the establishment of RASAs**, in principle.
- A safety study conducted by IATA highlighted the **crucial importance of safety oversight** insofar as deficient safety oversight systems were proved to be major contributing factors to poor safety records.
- The representatives from the Industry expressed a **clear support to the concept** of the regional approach and establishment of RASAs.
- Industry representatives acknowledged the **economies of scale** – and, in turn, the reduction of regulatory compliance burden on industry – that can be achieved through

the establishment of RASAs, even though, during the establishment process, some temporary additional costs may be foreseen.

- Industry representatives highlighted the fact that the regional approach applied to safety oversight usually **facilitates the development and exchange of Best Practices**. It also contributes to relieve unnecessary administrative burden on the industry by the development of harmonised regional standards. This allows the industry to focus its resources on safety aspects in lieu of administrative tasks.
- Some industry representatives expressed the view that part of the **savings** achieved through economies of scale (in a regional system) could be **transferred to the passengers**, through **reduction of airfare** – hence a positive domino effect on the economy.
- Some industry representatives laid the stress on the **high technical independence** achievable through a regional safety oversight system, which is not always possible at national level.

Theme 3. How to define the mandate of a RASA?

- Before a RASA is established, States must take a number of **decisions** regarding the RASA they want to create: which **mandate**, which **powers**, which **sources of funding**, which **members** etc.
- Some regions opted from a **top-down approach** (typically: decision makers WANT cooperation in the field of aviation; legal documents with high level principles are produced and the “working level” has to find a way and concrete solutions to implement these principles). Others preferred a **bottom-up approach**: the “working level” built a “working together experience”, little by little, each success being built on the previous one and preparing the following one. The legal formalisation of existing cooperation came as a last stage. In both cases, however, (and especially in the bottom-up approach), a **step by step** approach was retained. Establishing a regional safety oversight system is not an easy task and dealing with such a project requires an efficient phasing.
- In all cases, all RASAs are part of a **SYSTEM**, where States fully play their role and keep safety responsibilities; RASAs do not replace States. One of the most important steps in establishing a RASA is to carefully and clearly define the share of responsibilities between the national and regional levels.
- Almost all speakers and participants supported the principle of the **involvement of the industry** in the RASA establishment process.

Theme 4. How to size and finance a RASA?

- Sizing the RASA is a technical step that normally **follows** the **political decision** of defining the Agency’s mandate.
- Several options were identified throughout the world to fund RASAs, such as **State contributions, fees and charges, Community-like subsidies**.

Theme 5. Institutional issues; is it possible to create a RASA outside the institutional framework of a Regional Economic Community?

- There is **no “one size fits all” solution** to define the institutional framework of RASAs. Each region has its own specificities and constraints. Therefore, in the process of establishing RASAs, project managers must **be creative!** The institutional solution proposed for AAMAC and SARI are good examples of creative, tailor-made institutional frameworks.
- **Pragmatism** is essential; when establishing a RASA, creating a structure that will actually work and deliver appropriate services matters more than strictly following the conceptual ideas presented in various guidance materials.
- A strong message from legal experts was that when establishing a RASA, Project Managers should not let possible legal issues discourage them. **Legal engineering can provide suitable solutions** to most political orientations, as long as clear decisions are made.

Theme 6. Political issues: which process should be followed and which obstacles should be overcome to create a RASA?

- The meeting retained, as crucial elements / concepts to the success of establishing a RASA: **political will, commitment, sustainability, pragmatism.**
- The industry insisted on certain key words, such as: **harmonisation, standardisation, efficiency, team-work, transparency.**
- **Mobilising support from critical non-aeronautical actors**, such as Members of Parliament (especially those involved in the Transport Committee) can contribute to overcoming the “natural” reluctance to change often generated by the introduction of the RASA concept. RASAs furthermore offer opportunities to lessen the political workload of what are essentially technical regulatory institutions.

Theme 7. Concrete achievements

It was not possible to develop a comprehensive list of concrete achievements and success stories of RASAs throughout the World. However, some concrete achievements were mentioned and / or presented:

- The **European Co-ordination centre for Accident and Incident Reporting Systems (ECCAIRS)** and **European Community Safety Assessment of Foreign Aircraft (SAFA)** programmes are world widely recognised as references. These technically complex tools were developed regionally.

- In South Asia, common regulations on continuing airworthiness are being developed: **SARI-145** (common regulations) where a special focus is put on ensuring uniform interpretation and implementation of the regional rules. A few years ago, AFRAA had developed **AAR-145**.
- COCESNA developed the **Sistema de Información Aeronáutico Regional (SIAR)**, a software application dedicated to regional safety oversight tasks.
- AAMAC, CASSOS and BAG developed **Regional inspector schemes**. Such schemes require little institutionalisation and can yet produce positive effects on the region global safety oversight process. In a step-by-step approach, such schemes often constitute interesting practical steps which, by their “working together experience building” aspect, can pave the way for more structured cooperative agreements.
- In the EAC, CASSOA has developed harmonised civil aviation regulations and technical guidance materials to ensure harmonised and standardised safety and security regulations in the Partner States.
- Several RASAs developed **common exam schemes**, a crucial step towards licence mutual recognition at regional level.
- A concrete example of pragmatic regional project, mentioned by the Industry, was the development of regionally **approved aeronautical schools**.

Main Conclusions and Follow-up to the Symposium

The main conclusions can be summarised as follows:

- In vast majority of cases, a regional organisation supplements the national bodies but does not replace them. Through pooling of resources and standardised approaches national bodies are able to discharge their safety oversight obligations in a more efficient way, provide a more uniform level of safety and level playing field for the industry as well as allow for reduction of costs. Regional organisations are also expected to be in a better position to attract and retain qualified personnel;
- Regional bodies have a potential for creating more sustainability in managing aviation safety oversight, and to reduce the continuous need for the involvement of donor support. However, in the initial period of operation, external assistance may be crucially needed;
- Regional Economic Communities (REC) in Africa constitute useful, already existing legal and organisational framework, on which regional safety bodies can be built, as shown by the presentation of CASSOA and the UEMOA project, which generated a lot of interest. However, the involvement of the same states in different RECs may create difficulties. Presentations made by the UEMOA Commission and AAMAC illustrated the potential synergies that can be established between various structures, when a dialogue is in place.
- Political as well as technical, financial and legal considerations need to be taken into account when planning the establishment of a regional organisation. Practical experiences show however that solutions can be found even in politically difficult environments, if pragmatic approach and focus on safety issues prevails. This was exemplified by a very successful presentation of the SARI project (South Asian Regional Initiative) which triggered a lot of questions and a lively discussion;
- Although a bottom-up approach is often necessary for a regional organisation to emerge, it may be difficult to achieve sustainability if only a number of countries with weak administrative capacity and low level of aviation activities try to join forces together. Some interventions stressed that regional approaches in Africa could be successful when involving at least one country with relatively strong organisation and sufficiently high level of aviation activity, as exemplified by the presentation of BAGASOO, which was recognised as quite promising, or ACSA, which generated a huge interest from the audience and many exchanges. Regions with a strong institutional framework already in place, however, may combine a “bottom-up” and a “top-down” approach, in order to take advantage of both existing “working together” experiences and high level driven political will. The cases of CASSOA / EAC and UEMOA typically fall into this category.
- Involvement of the industry is crucial, especially if a regional approach is going to involve elimination of national differences in regulatory requirements. The process however should not be industry driven and at the end the governments should be ready to exert their responsibilities. All interventions from the representatives of the industry gave full support to regional approaches in Africa (streamlined and standardised procedures, reduction of audits and inspections, stronger safety oversight to contribute to better perception of African airlines etc.);
- The issue of regional vs. global governance needs to be addressed, and in particular the relationship between ICAO and regional bodies. The reference has been made to the work

of the ICAO Multidisciplinary Group on Regional Bodies, which is expected to finalise its work in the coming months. The Secretary of the group (Dr. Ruwantissa Abeyratne) invited the representatives of regional bodies to provide input.

Follow-up to the symposium

This symposium was very instrumental in gathering representatives of several regional organisations at different stages of their development, States and the industry. This enabled a very fertile exchange of experience and put in light the various forms and solutions retained in different regions of the world.

The delegates showed a great interest in the information brought to them that was coupled with a strong willingness to go more in the details of some of the themes, which was not possible due to time constraints.

While it appears that the support and assistance of the international community and ICAO is welcome and needed (kindly refer to the conclusions proposed by ICAO in the annex), this symposium also highlighted the need and benefit of instituting a direct dialogue between the different regional organisations (in place or in progress).

There was a consensus that this symposium should be followed-up by other activities (e.g. workshops) that would explore in more details different aspects of the implementation of RASA in order to address practical problems faced by the regional organisations and their member states.

EASA, the European Commission and AFCAC are ready, in principle, to support the follow-up activities, subject to availability of resources. To this end, States and Organisations involved are invited to forward their proposals to the European Commission (DG-TREN or local delegations), EASA International Cooperation Department or to the AFCAC Secretariat. ICAO and other partners also expressed their readiness, in principle, to contribute to such future activities.

Participants thanked the organisers of the event (AFCAC, EASA, Zambian Authorities) and expressed appreciation to the Government and people of Zambia for their warm and kind hospitality.

Annex

Conclusions proposed by ICAO

Dr. Ruwantissa Abeyratne, Acting Deputy Director, ICAO Air Transport Bureau, kindly proposed the following conclusions during the closing session of the symposium as a summary on ICAO's perspective on RASAs.

1. African States take strong regional initiatives towards establishing RASAs in cooperation with ICAO.
2. Strong communication should be maintained by RASAs with ICAO in seeking ICAO assistance.
3. RASAs and African states provide information to ICAO to the extent possible with a view to assisting ICAO in its efforts to formulating clear ICAO policy on regional governance and regional aviation bodies including RASAs.
4. The Air Navigation Commission and ICAO will provide support to the extent possible in establishing and sustaining RASAs.
5. There should be total commitment between the key stakeholders in establishing and sustaining RASAs.
6. ICAO announced the development of specific policies concerning RASAs and the establishment of liaison functions. It further informed the meeting of ongoing work on legal aspects of RASA and forthcoming updates of existing guidance material on RASAs.