

FOREWORDS

International Civil Aviation Organization



By Roberto Kobeh Gonzalez, ICAO Council President

Safety of international air navigation services is the primary goal of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Global demand for a regulatory framework, which will provide the means to integrate unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) into non-segregated airspace, continues to increase as this new field of aviation develops. Each year, the technologies supporting UAS advance, the number and types of UAS expand and the pressure on States to grant airworthiness and operational approvals increases. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), working with experts nominated by States and international organizations from around the world, is at the forefront of responding to these demands.

ICAO, based in Montréal, Canada, was established in 1944 with the objective of ensuring that international civil aviation be developed in a safe and orderly manner and that international air transport services be established on the basis of equality of opportunity and operated soundly and economically. For 66 years now, this has been the guiding policy of ICAO.

The Convention on International Civil Aviation, the charter of ICAO, lays the foundation for international civil aviation laws and regulations. The 96 articles of the Convention establish the privileges and restrictions of all Contracting States and provide for the adoption of International Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) regulating international air transport. The Convention accepts the principle that every State has complete and exclusive sovereignty over the airspace above its territory and provides that no scheduled international air service may operate over or into the territory of a Contracting State without its prior consent. Reinforcing this principle, Article 8 of the Convention addresses pilotless aircraft as follows:

No aircraft capable of being flown without a pilot shall be flown without a pilot over the territory of a contracting State without special authorization by that State and in accordance with the terms of such authorization. Each contracting State undertakes to insure that the flight of such aircraft without a pilot in regions open to civil aircraft shall be so controlled as to obviate danger to civil aircraft.

The Global Air Traffic Management Operational Concept (Doc 9854) states “[a]n unmanned [aircraft] is a pilotless aircraft, in the sense of Article 8 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, which is flown without a pilot-in-command on-board and is either remotely and fully controlled from another place (ground, another aircraft, space) or programmed and fully autonomous.” This understanding of UAS was endorsed by the 35th ICAO Assembly, Montréal, 28 September - 8 October 2004, ensuring that special provisions apply to all aircraft flown without a pilot on-board.

The aims and objectives of ICAO, as contained in Article 44 of the Chicago Convention, are to develop the principles and techniques of international air navigation and to foster the planning and development of international air transport so as to:

- insure the safe and orderly growth of international civil aviation throughout the world;
- encourage the arts of aircraft design and operation for peaceful purposes;
- promote safety of flight in international air navigation;
- promote the development of all aspects of international civil aeronautics.

In this regard, ICAO undertook to explore the subject of unmanned aviation and how it could be addressed within the ICAO regulatory framework. Following this assessment, it was agreed by the Air Navigation Commission (ANC) of ICAO that, while the Organization should not be the entity responsible for developing detailed technical specifications, it would be appropriate that ICAO lead the global harmonization effort to define unmanned aviation. The Unmanned Aircraft Systems Study Group (UASSG) was therefore established and tasked with assisting the Secretariat in coordinating the development of performance-based SARPs, Procedures and guidance material for civil unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), to support a safe, secure and efficient integration of UAS into non-segregated airspace and aerodromes.

Fourteen States and eight international organizations actively participate in the UASSG. Experts from many parts of the world come together with their diverse backgrounds and perspectives to allow a full range of ideas and approaches to be considered as the Study Group advances its work toward global harmonization. As the work programme matures, it will be brought to the Air Navigation Commission for approval and further distribution among appropriate technical panels. Legal and technical experts from throughout the ICAO Secretariat will work to progress the development of the SARPs and PANS needed to facilitate integration of unmanned aircraft systems into the global air navigation system.

Roberto Kobeh Gonzalez
Council President
International Civil Aviation
Organization

