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25 years USOAP CMA - Year in Review

- Editorial

By Jimena Blumenkron, Policy Lead, MAC

Review of USOAP Continuous Monitoring Approach (CMA) activities and results in 2023, with outlook for 2024 and beyond.

USOAP CMA ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS IN 2023

In 2023, a total of 31 USOAP activities were conducted, including 15 CMA audits, one mandatory information request (MIR), six ICAO Coordinated Validation Missions (ICVMs), one off-site validation (OVA), three State Safety Programme Implementation Assessments (SSPIAs), and five workshops, thus meeting the objectives set in ICAO's Operating Plan for the reporting period.

Seven activities were postponed: five at the request of the State; one due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and one due to security reasons.

The USOAP Activity Plan, issued as an electronic bulletin twice a year, lists the scheduled USOAP CMA activities for previous, current, and upcoming years, as well as publishes their postponements or cancellations with the associated reasons.

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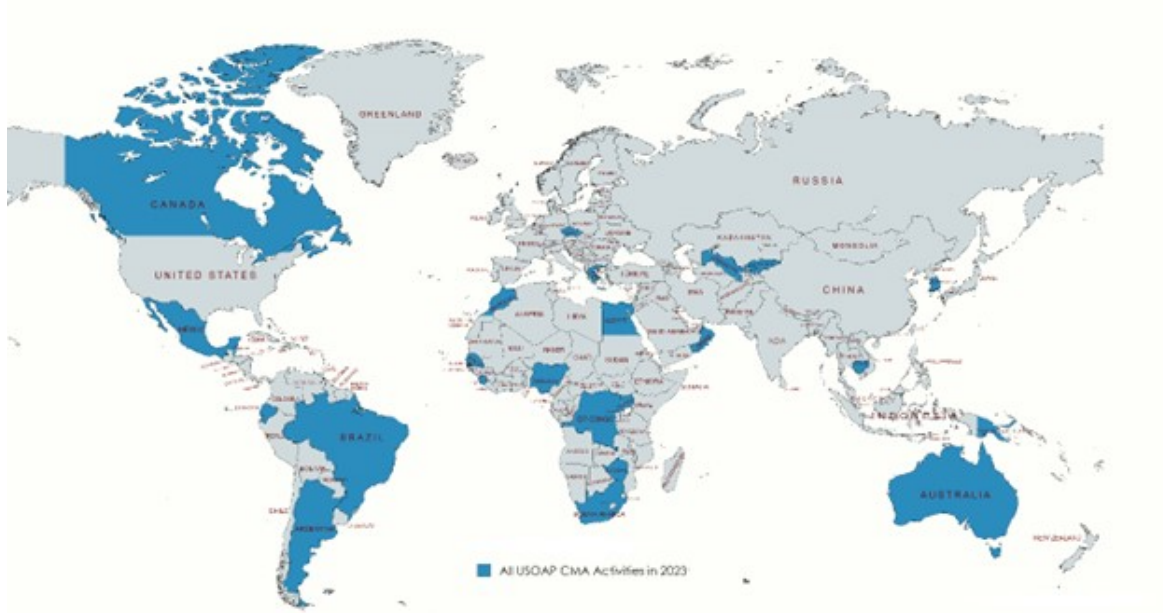


Figure 1: USOAP CMA Activities in 2023

The global Effective Implementation (EI) reached 69.47% in 2023, which represents an increase of 1.06 per cent compared to 2022. Figure 2 below shows the EI trend over the period of 2012 to 2023.

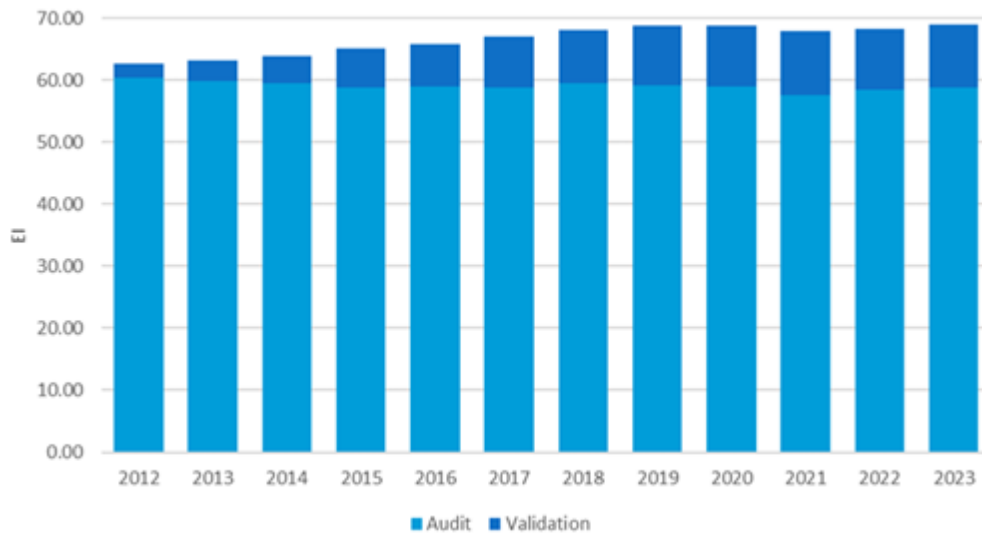


Figure 2: EI trend by type of activity. Average ICAO States' EI 2012-2023

In the reporting year of 2023, the lowest values of EI were observed in CE-8: *Resolution of safety issues* (57.0%), CE-4: *Qualified technical personnel* (61.9%) and CE-7: *Surveillance Obligations* (62.3%). By audit area, the lowest EI values were in the areas of aircraft accident and incident investigation (AIG) at 55.3%, aerodromes and ground aids (AGA) at 65.2% and air navigation services (ANS) at 65.6%.

EI values (per cent) by critical element (CE) and audit area in 2012 and 2023 are compared in figures 3 and 4.

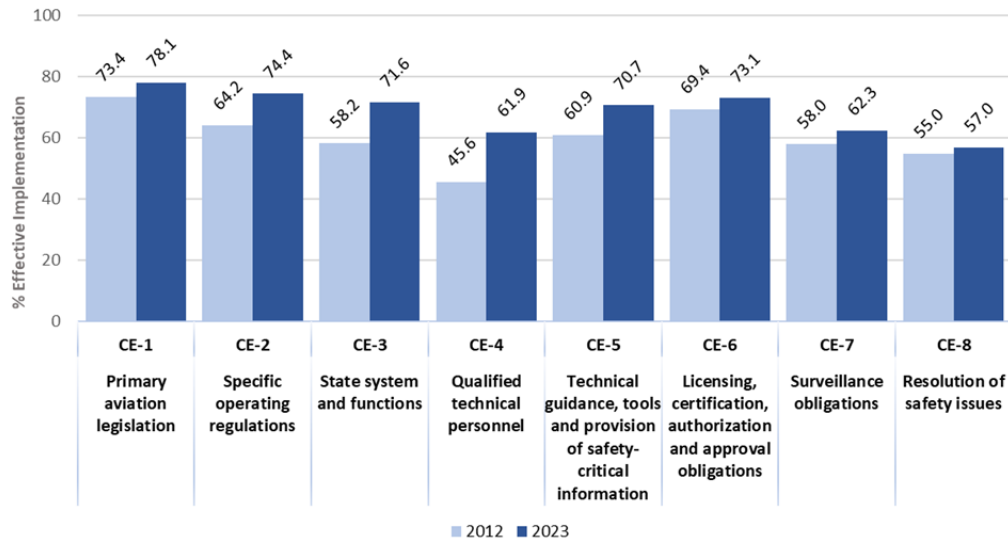


Figure 3: Global level of EI by Critical Element in 2012 and 2023

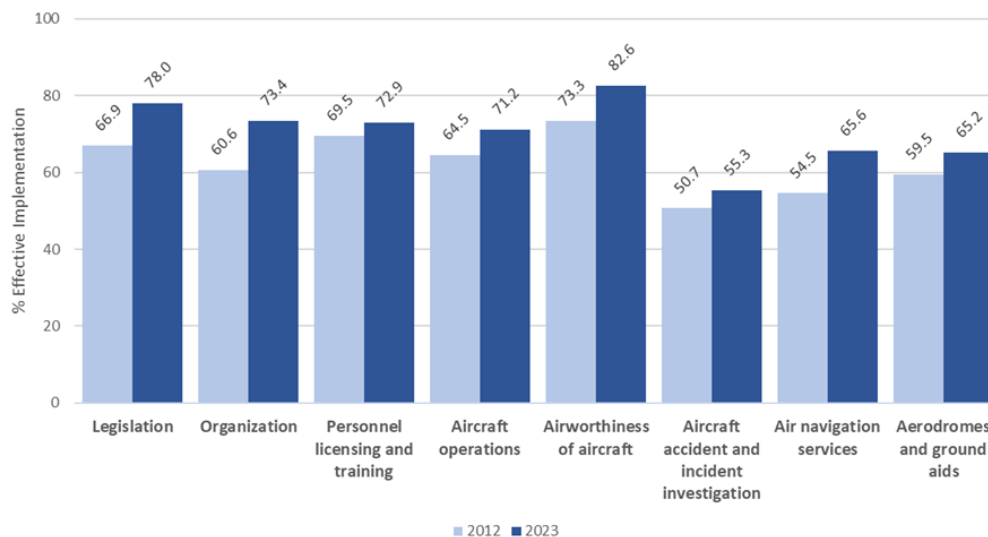


Figure 4: Global level of EI by Audit Area in 2012 and 2023

Regarding significant safety concerns (SSCs), in 2023 Argentina resolved an existing SSC, while five new SSCs were identified in three other States. Currently, nine SSCs remained unresolved affecting six States in the areas of aircraft operations (OPS), airworthiness of aircraft (AIR) and air navigation services (ANS).

USOAP CMA ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023

- USOAP Sustainability and Improvements Stream

The Programme continued to assess and mitigate risks associated with its execution through the implementation of its risk-reduction strategy. ICAO released the fifth edition of the *USOAP CMA Manual* (Doc 9735) in all official languages between August and October 2023. The new content included recommendations received from different advisory groups and was promulgated to States via the USOAP CMA workshops.

Continued collaboration with States ensured the sustainability of USOAP through the provision of long-term secondments. ICAO is grateful to all States that contributed long and short-term secondments to support the Programme.

Communication within ICAO, as well as with Member States and partners, continued to be a priority for the Programme in 2023. ICAO leveraged its newsletter, public website and other communication channels to share information about its milestone 1000th USOAP activity (South Africa CMA audit in March 2023), as well as current Programme news and future developments.

Regular meetings were held with the Regional Offices to obtain information in support of the prioritization of Member States for USOAP CMA activities and associated planning tasks. ICAO also conducted regular exchanges with its partners on USOAP monitoring activities that enabled the coordination of activities to minimize burden on States while contributing to the USOAP CMA prioritization process.

In 2023, the Programme received a three-year Quality Management System (QMS) re-certification in accordance with the ISO 9001:2015 standard. In addition, the internal audit conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight (OIO) endorsed the implementation of the previous four recommendations, leaving no action items open for ICAO to implement.

The Online Framework (OLF) capabilities were enhanced with new tools and updates, such as the USOAP Prioritization Manager, the USOAP/USAP Planning Manager, and the ICAO Annex Manager. Additional tools to support USOAP activities are available in the OLF, such as the USOAP CMA Community and the updated USOAP State profile. Now OLF feeds data directly to other ICAO platforms, such as iSTARS, the ICAO Data Service, and the Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP) dashboards.

The ICAO Council agreed to include the USOAP/USAP evolution and engagement on the list of Priority Focus Areas. In so doing, the Secretariat is allowed to proceed with the outlined reprioritization steps of the 2023-2025 Business Plan.

MILESTONES AND IMPROVEMENTS PLANNED FOR 2024

For 2024, the USOAP CMA plans to focus on policy and training updates. The USOAP sustainability and improvements stream will continue with its risk-reduction strategy and quality assurance processes.

The next amendment of the Protocol Questions (PQs) is due in 2024. Updates to the Regional Office Manual and the USOAP Communication Strategy are also planned for the same period.

ICAO will continue the integration of the SSPIA into its traditional USOAP activities. In addition, the planned development of USOAP online framework (OLF) 2.0 will bring important improvements to this web-based platform. Work is also planned to enhance the use of data and information available to ICAO for the monitoring of States under the USOAP.

For 2024, 18 USOAP CMA audits (including 16 full-scope audits), three ICVMs, and five regional workshops were planned. Cost-recovery activities may be conducted upon request by States, depending on priorities and availability of resources.

ICAO will continue to monitor States' activities through the OLF and prioritize activities using enhanced risk factors criteria, indicators and information obtained by the Programme. Off-site and virtual activities will continue to be deployed, as appropriate.

OUTLOOK FOR THE CURRENT TRIENNIUM AND BEYOND

Until the end of the current triennium, the USOAP CMA will continue to update State EI scores based on the results of the USOAP activities. All States will be subject to a USOAP CMA activity within eight years to maintain confidence in the EI score, in line with the principle of universality of the Programme. Based on a recent analysis, the Programme estimates that this timeframe may be extended to up to 12 years if the monitoring yields confidence in the sustainability of the State's safety oversight system.

Since 2022, the USOAP CMA started planning full-scope audits to provide comprehensive assessments to States on the sustainability of their safety oversight systems. While the EI increased in 2023, the analysis of data suggests that the sustainability of States' safety oversight and accident/incident investigation systems may not be progressive. The regular conduct of USOAP activities supports States in understanding their deficiencies and compliance with the latest ICAO standards.

ICAO will continue building USOAP CMA capacity and understanding of the States' progress in fulfilling their safety oversight obligations. The Programme intends to adjust its activity planning in order to provide States with enhanced information on their performance, sustainability, and resilience in carrying out their safety oversight responsibilities.



USOAP Auditor Preparation Course Becomes Compulsory for Auditor Candidates Scheduled for On-the-Job Training (OJT) as of January 2024

[Update on the USOAP CMA Auditor Preparation Course.](#)

By Mihail Peytchev, Programme Implementation Officer, OSU

Overview

ICAO has developed the USOAP Auditor Preparation course to improve the success rate of its auditor checkout missions. Statistically, candidates who have successfully completed the course are likely to perform better at their OJT assessments.

This week-long classroom course provides trainees with further insight into practical auditing techniques, under the supervision of experienced instructors.

Case studies and practical exercises are used to develop the skillset necessary for prospective auditors to be effective audit team members in USOAP CMA activities.

Progress Results

Since its launch in 2022, the course has been completed by more than 50 aviation professionals, including auditor candidates and civil aviation authority (CAA) staff involved in USOAP activities, from 24 States and five international organizations.

The most recent session, which took place from 13 to 17 May 2024 was attended by 15 auditor candidates scheduled for OJT this year.

The Latest Updates

The recent OJT results and the positive feedback received from graduates have proven the value of the course in the process of training the auditor candidates to succeed in their OJT checkout.

For this reason, USOAP has decided to make the Auditor Preparation course compulsory for all OJT candidates, **effective January 1st, 2024.**

Consequently, auditor candidates who have been scheduled for an upcoming OJT should plan to complete this course before going on their OJT missions. They can sign up online to the next available course session here: <https://igat.icao.int/ated/TrainingCatalogue/Course/5474>



My USOAP Diary

Sharing My Experience as a Seconded Technical Officer at ICAO USOAP

Gyunghwa (Claire) Sohn,

(Former) Technical Officer, OAS/MAC/ANB



I am currently writing this during my repatriation flight heading to Seoul, Republic of Korea. Approaching the end of my secondment term with the ICAO USOAP, I reflect on what a great opportunity this has been for me to deepen my understanding of the Programme, enhance my technical expertise in Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) implementation, and integrate myself into the international aviation community with lovely colleagues and friends. I feel privileged to be able to share such a remarkable experience through this newsletter. Now, let me begin to unpack my bag of memories, one by one.

The ICAO working environment can be described as multicultural and harmonious. A typical day there begins with greetings and conversations with colleagues who come from all over the world. ICAO has a working culture that promotes understanding and respect to various approaches, driven by diverse cultural backgrounds. At first, this was a new experience for me, but soon after it became an integral part of myself that helped me to understand and respect diversity.

Training was the first step of my journey to become a member of the USOAP family and an auditor. The training programme comprised lectures and on-site On-the-Job-Training (OJT) with assessment, aiming to facilitate effective participation and contribution of the secondee. Understanding of the audit area connected with my technical background was given special care by the relevant Standard and Procedure Officer. Through the whole training process, I was able to gradually integrate my personal expertise into USOAP.

Officially, my auditor training ended with my OJT assessment. However, my learning process still continues, particularly with each mission I participate in, and I am sure that it is the same for most of my auditor colleagues. The civil aviation system and its operational context vary from one State to another, and every mission is a valuable opportunity to share insights with experts from every State we audit.

My contribution to the programme in a number of areas, provided me with a more comprehensive understanding of the entire USOAP processes. The on-site mission is a core USOAP activity, however, the programme would not work without thorough planning, preparation, and systematic post-mission follow-ups such as review and validation of the audit results. At the same time, the evolution of USOAP is on-going at ICAO Headquarters, in line with the changing needs of the programme and trends in SARPs. Following my approval as a subject matter expert and an auditor, I was assigned tasks related to audits, ICVMs, and corrective action plans (CAPs) in line with my expertise and qualifications. The experience derived from working on these tasks has changed my initial perception about USOAP.

My New Impression of USOAP

The Quality of USOAP

As I mentioned previously, every State has a different aviation system in size and complexity. This means that none of the USOAP activities are same as the previously conducted ones. So, ICAO makes every effort to maintain the same quality of results regardless of differences in each State and activities conducted by different auditors.

Cross-checks with the Team Lead on documents and evidences; technical reviews and validations on preliminary audit results; confirmation of the draft report with the audited State; and so on are steps conducted for every activity to

ensure accuracy and quality of the USOAP activities in a standardized fashion. In my view, the quality of USOAP activities is equally well-maintained in both technical and procedural aspects.

The Value of USOAP

My initial perception of USOAP was “the world-famous safety audit programme” generating safety indicators for every member State. Over the period of my secondment at ICAO, the value of audits for me has become much more than a “world-famous assessment”. It is a service provided by ICAO that identifies “where States are” on their continuous way of improving their State aviation safety system. While technical support and guidance are not part of the on-site audits, States are provided with indicators and factual information based on 790 protocol questions (PQs) in key safety domains, equally applied to every State by certified technical experts. I am sure that this information will be valuable for States to help them improve the level of their safety oversight.

Benefits for States providing secondees to USOAP

As a secondee going back to my State, there are two key benefits for States of providing secondees to ICAO, in my view. One is a better understanding of the USOAP programme, and the other is the exposure to SARPs implementation cases. Many instances of implementation best practices employed by different States served as eye-openers and made think outside the box.

I am going back to my State of origin with valuable experience and unforgettable memories from great colleagues who helped me with; settling down in the beautiful city of Montreal, getting used to a new office, and successfully navigating every on-site mission in different States that inherently present diverse cultures and new environments.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the entire USOAP family for their warm reception and assistance. In addition, I present my sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Korea for granting me this unique opportunity to serve at ICAO as a secondee.

Thank you for reading my USOAP diary. Merci et bonne journée à vous tous!



*Claire with Denis Guindon - Deputy Director MAC/ANB,
Junjian Nie - Chief OAS/MAC and colleagues from OAS/MAC.*



DEPARTURES:

Farewell to two valuable team members who have completed their secondments and to Capt. Denis Guindon who has elected to retire from ICAO after six years of service...

Ms. Gyunghwa Sohn (Claire), Technical Officer ANS/OAS, has returned to the Republic of Korea at the end of April 2024. Claire has spent three years with USOAP and has participated in a number of audit activities during her secondment.

Mr. Shyh Syaun Wong (Sebastian), Technical Officer SSPIA/OAS seconded from Singapore to ICAO, has returned home at the end of May 2024 after nearly four years with USOAP. Sebastian's support to the process of SSPIA integration into the Programme has been invaluable.

Capt. Denis Guindon, Deputy Director, MAC retired from ICAO at the end of May 2024 after leading USOAP for over six years. Staff from MAC, ANB and ICAO, including D/ANB gathered at the terrace on the 5th floor to recognize Denis' contribution to the Programme and to bid him a warm farewell in a lovely "Bon Voyage Bash" party. Capt. Guindon will be missed by all of us.

We would like to thank Claire, Seb and especially Denis for their contribution to the Programme and to wish them all the best in their future professional and personal lives. They will always be part of the USOAP FAMILY!

ARRIVALS:

A warm welcome to all new arrivals!

Mr. Aziz Boulmane, from Morocco joined OAS on 11 December 2023 as Consultant - Personnel Licensing (PEL) and Flight Operations (OPS) expert to support the Programme in these technical areas.

Mr. Jérôme Patoureaux, Technical Officer, PEL/OAS, who is not new to the Programme, re-joined USOAP as a secondee from France on 2 April 2024.

Best of luck to all our new team members in their continued journey at ICAO!

