

USOAP Newsletter

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State Safety Programme Implementation Assessments (SSPIAs) — Development, Evolution and Maturation

Overview –

The State Safety Programme Implementation Assessment (SSPIA) is a performance-based activity, under the framework of the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) Continuous Monitoring Approach (CMA), in which ICAO assesses the level of maturity of a State Safety Programme (SSP) by conducting a systematic and objective review of the State’s implementation and maintenance of its SSP.

This activity follows six years of continuous efforts in evolving the approach used to better suit the nature of SSP implementation. Since 2015, while many States were progressing in SSP implementation, ICAO has been developing and maturing its methodology, processes and tools to conduct SSPIAs. In support of these efforts, in 2018, the Monitoring and Oversight (MO) office recruited a Standards and Procedure Officer (SPO) to be responsible for the area of Safety Management within the USOAP CMA.

SSPIA Roll-Out — Major Milestones:

Phase 0 of SSPIAs:

Initially, ICAO had planned to “audit” SSP implementation starting in 2015, using a set of Protocol Questions (referred to as “SSP PQs”), introduced especially for this purpose in the 2014 edition of the PQs. In early 2015, it was recognized, however, that the “satisfactory vs. non-satisfactory” approach used in the legacy USOAP CMA activities (such as audits) was not adapted for evaluating States’ progress in implementing SSPs, as such implementation was “performance-based” in nature.

Considering the best practices in assessing safety management implementation, including experience gathered in some States and regions in assessing the implementation of Safety Management Systems (SMS), it was decided to adjust the approach and conduct assessments, rather than audits, of SSP implementation with a few States, on a voluntary and confidential basis. The intent was to benefit the States (by providing them with feedback on their progress and achievements as well as opportunities for further enhancement of their SSP), USOAP (by progressively building a specific methodology for this new type of activity), and ICAO (by providing additional feedback on the challenges faced by States in SSP implementation).

During Phase 0, five States received an SSPIA, in which the approach was changed from an audit to an “assessment”, using the SSP PQs contained in the 2014 edition of the PQs. The assessments reviewed the States’ progress and highlighted achievements as well as opportunities for enhancement. The approach was purely qualitative. No score was given to the States following the completion of the activity and the activity had no impact on the States’ “Effective Implementation” (EI) values.

At the same time, MO started to progressively develop new, more relevant “SSP-related PQs”. In 2018, MO provided feedback to the ICAO Secretariat, the Safety Management Panel and ICAO’s governing bodies on the performance of these activities, as well as the observed challenges faced by States in SSP implementation. Based on the experience accumulated and lessons learned from these missions, it was decided to amend the SSP PQs in a manner that would better suit this new type of activity, including the performance-based environment in which SSP is implemented.

State Safety Programme Implementation Assessments (SSPIAs) *(cont'd)*

Development of Amended SSP-Related PQs:

In 2018, MO started developing an amended set of SSP PQs, which were more performance-based and did not call for a “satisfactory vs. non-satisfactory assessment”. Each PQ was linked to one of the four SSP components (i.e. State Safety Policy and Objectives, State Safety Risk Management, State Safety Assurance, and State Safety Promotion), rather than the eight Critical Elements associated with the legacy USOAP CMA activities.

The “technical areas” for SSPIAs became distinct from those in USOAP legacy activities. In the 2018 edition of the SSP-related PQs, the LEG and ORG areas were removed and two new areas were introduced, namely “General Aspects” (SSP.GEN) and “Safety Data Analysis” (SSP.SDA), in addition to the sector-specific areas (SSP.PEL, SSP.OPS, SSP.AIR, SSP.ANS, SSP.AGA and SSP.AIG).

Phase 1 of SSPIAs:

In 2018, Phase 1 of the SSPIAs was officially launched under the USOAP framework, in which the SSPIAs were still conducted on a voluntary basis but were no longer confidential. Under Phase 1, the SSPIA report focused primarily on two aspects: the State’s achievements (which were shared with all States following completion of the SSPIA process) and “Opportunities for Enhancement” (which were only shared with the assessed State and highlighted aspects in which the State could make further progress).

Three States (Finland, Spain and the United Arab Emirates) received an SSPIA under Phase 1. The “achievements” part of their SSPIA reports is posted on the USOAP Online Framework (OLF) to inform all States of the outcomes of the SSPIAs and enable them to further explore any good practices observed in the assessed States.

Development of Maturity Levels Assessment Tool:

In 2020, ICAO established an SSPIA group of experts, comprised of eight experts coming from seven States (Australia, Canada, Finland, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, the United States and Spain) and one regional safety oversight organization (European Union Aviation Safety Agency or EASA), to support MO in finalizing the SSPIA maturity level assessment tool and its related guidance material as well as in identifying additional areas of improvements for the proposed tool and associated guidance material. The outcome of this work was shared with the Safety Management Panel members and internally within ICAO, and a very positive feedback was received, along with proposed opportunities for enhancement. Upon reviewing the comments received, the maturity levels matrices were amended and the SSPIA assessment tool was finalized and posted on the OLF in December 2020.

As part of the assessment tool, five maturity levels were determined and criteria were developed for levels 2 and 3 for each PQ.

The five determined maturity levels are:

- 0: Not present and not planned;
- 1: Not present but being worked on;
- 2: Present;
- 3: Present and effective; and
- 4: Present and effective for years and in continuous improvement.

State Safety Programme Implementation Assessments (SSPIAs) *(cont'd)*

Phase 2 of SSPIAs:

Following the inception of Phase 2 which will no longer be voluntary nor confidential, the SSPIA becomes a more integral and coherent part of USOAP and will provide ICAO with a picture of how States are progressing in implementing and maintaining their SSPs. This phase, which would be quantitative, will be reflected in terms of maturity level for each assessed PQ by utilizing the newly developed assessment tool.

In 2021, MO reported to ICAO's governing bodies on its preparedness to deploy Phase 2 of the SSPIAs, with its first mission to be launched once health, safety and travel restrictions are lifted.

Envisaged Future Steps:

Phase 3 of the SSPIAs:

In accordance with the concept of continuous improvement, MO will revisit the methodology, processes and tools of Phase 2 upon completion of the current three-year phase and will take action, as necessary, to refine them based on lessons learned and new development that will need to be reflected in the assessments.

What does MO do to support States' preparation and readiness to undergo an SSPIA?

In support of States' preparation for an SSPIA, MO has initiated two main measures:

- SSPIA Workshop – Similar to the USOAP CMA workshops, the SSPIA workshop aims to provide valuable information to States on how the SSPIA is conducted, including its methodologies, processes and tools.
- SSPIA Q&A Sheet – The Q&A sheet aims to provide brief answers to the most common queries that MO receives from States and this will be posted on the OLF shortly.



Changing the Game: USOAP CMA Virtual and Remote Activities

COVID-19 has had an unprecedented effect on the aviation industry. Likewise, it has had a profound impact on the USOAP CMA.

With health and travel restrictions preventing the conduct of USOAP's on-site oversight activities, MO adapted its working methods to focus on its current remote practices and new virtual activities.

MO had conducted documentation-based audits (DBA) previously. Normally, these audits were reserved for States where limited aviation activity does not warrant on-site activity or where security situation, as classified under the UN Security Level System, precludes an on-site activity. MO has now expanded the use of the DBAs to include States where health and safety situations prevent a visit to the States.

A State will be assigned an Effective Implementation (EI) number at the completion of a DBA. This DBA EI is not the same as a "traditional" EI since it is not based on all applicable PQs. A State will keep the DBA EI until an on-site

activity can be conducted and all remaining PQs have been audited.

In addition, MO has also implemented virtual ICAO Coordinated Validation Missions (ICVMs). These validation missions are conducted in the same manner as the on-site version, covering all relevant audit areas and relevant and applicable PQs.

States are selected for the activity based on the normal ICVM criteria, though the State must be able to maintain remote connectivity for the duration of the validation and be able to provide evidence digitally upon request.

Although the pandemic has upended MO's normal operations, the office has demonstrated its agility by innovating ways to perform its basic functions. These remote and virtual activities also provide flexible methods to conduct USOAP CMA activities in the future for States with special situations, even after the end of these exceptional circumstances .

New Guidelines for NCMCs Now Available!

On 10 May 2021, ICAO published the first-ever Guidelines for National Continuous Monitoring Coordinators (NCMCs) on the ICAO USOAP Online Framework.

This new guidance material is available in the CMA Library in English, French, and Spanish. The document describes the roles and responsibilities of NCMCs as well as provides States with guidance on the selection and training of NCMCs.

Specifically, the document elaborates on the NCMCs' participation in supporting the fulfilment of their States' responsibilities and duties under the USOAP CMA, including specific responsibilities before, during, and after USOAP CMA activities.

States and their NCMCs are strongly encouraged to review and use the Guidelines as part of their overall participation in the USOAP CMA.

Reminder: USOAP AG Consultation State Letter

ICAO issued State Letter AN 19/51-21/24, dated 19 March 2021, requesting States' views on the recommendations of the USOAP Advisory Group (USOAP AG). The USOAP AG recommendations can be found on the USOAP public website [here](#). Responses from States regarding their reactions to the proposed expansion of USOAP should reach ICAO by **30 July 2021**. The outcome of the consultation is expected to be presented to the ICAO Council during its upcoming 225th Session.



2021-2022 USOAP CMA Activities

For more than a year, MO has not conducted any USOAP on-site activities due to restrictions from the COVID-19 global pandemic. In 2021, 7 of 10 planned on-site audit and validation activities were postponed, while scheduling of 3 USOAP CMA workshops and 2 SSPIA workshops have not been finalized.

MO has carried on with its USOAP oversight activities by conducting 1 documentation-based audit, 1 focused audit and 3 virtual ICVMs. In addition, 3 off-site validation activities were completed, with another 5 currently in progress.

All scheduled activities remaining on the 2021 activity plan will be considered based on current global health and safety assessments by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) and the World Health Organization (WHO) as well as travel and health restrictions for the specific State.

An ICAO Electronic Bulletin on the 2022 provisional USOAP activity plan will be published in June 2021, to be followed by an updated version in January 2022.

Monitoring and Oversight websites:

ICAO public websites:
www.icao.int/safety/CMAForum

USOAP CMA Online Framework:
www.icao.int/usoap

USOAP Continuous Monitoring Approach



Promoting global aviation safety

by continuously monitoring and updating
the safety oversight capabilities of all ICAO Member States.

