



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS' ASSOCIATIONS

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Press Release

RVSM Implementation in the AFI Region

On 25 September 2008, the ICAO Africa-Indian Ocean Region (AFI) joined the rest of the world by implementing Reduced Vertical Separation Minimum (RVSM) procedures in its airspace. Early reports indicate that the transition to the new minimum was largely achieved in a safe, orderly and efficient manner. The International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations (IFATCA) wishes to congratulate all stakeholders involved in the process, including ICAO, Civil Aviation Authorities, Air Navigation Service Providers, air traffic controllers, pilots, air navigation engineers/technicians, AFI Region Monitoring Agency (ARMA), the Project Management Team and others, who worked tirelessly to ensure that RVSM was successfully introduced in the region.

With such a congratulatory note, however, IFATCA wishes to call on the relevant authorities not to be complacent now that RVSM has taken off smoothly. It is apparent that not everything that was supposed to be in place as a precondition to the introduction of RVSM was actually in place by 25 September. There were still reports of deficiencies in CNS infrastructure, training of air traffic controllers and other shortcomings. It is imperative that the parties concerned fully address these outstanding safety issues as a matter of urgency.

It should be noted that by implementing RVSM the airspace capacity is greatly increased and aircraft can operate more efficiently, thus reducing their environmental impact. This results in the air traffic controller having an increased workload and being under greater pressure in ensuring all aircraft can safely operate to the new standards. Unfortunately the dramatic expansion of air services in the AFI region is not being matched by the development of air traffic services and corresponding increase in controllers - in some areas there has been a significant decrease in the number of operational controllers. Even worse, in some parts of the AFI region, and in particular in ASECNA States, some of the controllers involved in industrial action before the implementation of RVSM remain in custody, are suspended from their jobs without pay, or are otherwise harassed by the authorities, despite the fact that their colleagues exercised utmost restraint in continuing to work under deplorable employment conditions so as not to jeopardize the implementation of RVSM.

IFATCA believes that the unresolved industrial and social dispute between ASECNA and its air traffic control employees remains a major stumbling block in the provision of a guaranteed safe and efficient air traffic management service in the airspace and airports under ASECNA's control. We therefore reiterate our call for ASECNA to facilitate the release of the detained ATCOs, restore working rights to those suspended and end all discrimination against those who supported the legitimate actions. We also ask the Agency to respond positively to initiatives on meaningful dialogue as proposed by IFATCA, with a view to positively resolving the long overdue safety concerns raised by the controllers.

IFATCA is the worldwide organization representing more than fifty thousand air traffic controllers in 133 countries. Amongst its goals are the promotion of safety, efficiency and regularity in international air navigation and the protection and safeguarding of the interests of the air traffic control profession.

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