



Brussels, 7 April 2005
F2/FR D(2005)

**SINGLE EUROPEAN SKY EXTENSION TO SOUTH EAST EUROPE (SES-SEE INITIATIVE)
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION (DGCAs) MEETING**

Minutes of the First Meeting

1. INTRODUCTION

The first meeting of the DGCAs group took place on 1 April 2005 in the Borschette Conference Centre building in Brussels.

All invited States (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro) were represented at the level of Director General of Civil Aviation level. UNMIK, the Stability Pact for South of Europe, Eurocontrol, ICAO, NATO and representatives of Italy and Greece were also present. (See Annex 1 for attendance list).

The chairman Mr Daniel Calleja, Director for the European Commission (EC) Air Transport Department, highlighted the political importance of the initiative and explained the aim of the meeting that was to obtain common agreement both on the objectives and on the process. He strongly underlined that since the Single European Sky (SES) extension was a part of the European Common Aviation Area (ECAA) agreement, the meeting was closely connected to the previous and successful meeting on this topic which had took place the day before. As airspace is a continuum, he recalled that early results in this region were expected to improve air traffic flow throughout whole Europe.

Mr Busek, Special Coordinator for Stability Pact, stressed the political significance of the initiative in terms of regional cooperation, which was the “raison d’être” of the Stability Pact. It considered that it was a very important signal that the countries of the region were approaching the question of modernising air traffic control in a dispassionate way, led by operational considerations and putting aside sensitive sovereignty issues. He expressed strong support to the initiative, which also will help the countries to cope with the increasing expected air traffic. Moreover he mentioned the Energy Community for South East Europe (ECSEE) process as a fruitful example to be considered for developing the initiative.

2. PRESENTATIONS

Eurocontrol (Alex Hendriks, Head of Airspace / Flow Management & Navigation Business Division and Jean Jacques Sauvage, Head of the Director Cabinet) presented the traffic demand forecast and the permanent route network developments in South East Europe, which showed the increasing necessity of improving airspace management in the region. Therefore ATM multinational cooperation is of the utmost importance in an area with high economic potential, located at key interfaces with other Regions such as the Middle East and Far East. The path to progress should be based on the best and cooperative use of new ATM facilities, avoiding unnecessary expenditure and especially taking fully into account CEATS current development and expertise. Additionally they provided informations on the Air Safety and Air Traffic Control multi-country Programme funded by the EC and managed by Eurocontrol.

The ICAO representative (George Firican) recalled that airspace management should be exclusively based on the basis of technical and operational considerations and that delegation to another State the responsibility for providing air traffic services did not imply recognition of sovereignty of that State over the airspace concerned. In this context the Functional Airspace Block concept was fully in line with ICAO Strategy. Furthermore he stressed the expected benefits of the regional approach: safe, efficient and cost effective provision of Air Navigation Services and progress through openness, cooperation and professionalism. He confirmed the commitment of the Organisation to support the EC's SES extension to consolidate multinational airspace management.

The EC/DG TREN (Ms Panagopoulou) made clear the objectives of the EU High Level Group on the extension of the Trans-European Network to neighbouring countries, which is chaired by Ms de Palacio. It is to propose to include besides specific priority axes and projects, horizontal measures addressing border-crossing transport network such as air traffic management. These horizontal priorities were important for the development of an efficient transport system and strengthening regional cooperation as well as good links with the EU. Appropriate cooperation should be undertaken between the High Level Group and the SES-SEE initiative so as to allow the Group to recommend concrete ATM actions thereby offering opportunities to finance these actions. In this context, Mr Calleja emphasized the high priority that projects related to Functional Airspace Blocks received in relation to the Trans Europe Network-Transport (TEN-T) funding.

Finally, ROMATSA (Mr Chivulescu), the Romanian Air Traffic Services Administration, presented an extensive and comprehensive overview on the Air Traffic Management cooperation endorsed by Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania and Turkey (ACE Memorandum of Understanding) covering all ATM matters and open to further participation. Special focus was made on the initiative made by Bulgaria and Romania for creating the pre-requisites for the establishment functional airspace block over their countries.

3. DISCUSSION ON THE INITIATIVE

The EC/ATM Unit (Mr Ben van Houtte) described the main features of the SES-SEE initiative:

- Political impetus to support ATM improvement by overcoming airspace fragmentation,

- EU membership perspective for the Western Balkans and part of the incoming ECAA,
- Addressing airspace and air traffic management as first issue by promoting functional airspace block approach as a main driver of the implementation of the SES,
- Taking into account the current regional ATM developments,
- Political agreement for starting the process and to endorse the results to be given by States with the support of the EC, working process to be run by operational entities with the support of international organisations,
- Early results were needed to address expected traffic increase.
- EC financial support could be expected for the working process.

Answering the concerns expressed by Bulgaria on the overload created by the concomitance of similar initiatives (ACE, ICAO programmes and SES-SEE) and the possible overlapping of the tasks, the EC emphasised the requested compatibility and complementarities with the existing developments without excluding future convergence of the initiative.

With regard to the final formal agreement, the EC indicated that it was too early to anticipate the result of the process but that it would have had to keep in mind that the ECAA would constitute the general political framework of the initiative.

4. DECISION

Each delegation then took the floor to explicitly express their commitment to participate to the SES-SEE initiative. The initiative will be based on the contents and process described on the text presented in Annex 1 and summed up as follows:

- Opportunities will be reviewed with a view to implementing the Functional Airspace Block approach in the South East of Europe,
- A Working Group chaired by the EC will be set up to carry out this task. The Group will be comprised of two representatives of the States Directors General of Civil Aviation of participating States and UNMIK, the Stability Pact, Eurocontrol, ICAO and NATO, and could be open to other States and international organisations. Italy clearly expressed its will to participate. Names of the representatives should be provided to the European Commission by 13 April.2005.
- The tasks of the Working Group will be those presented in Annex 2
- The Working Group will deliver a first report on the opportunities for the application of a Functional Airspace Block approach by the end of 2005. On the basis of this report, the Directors General of Civil Aviation of the participating countries together with the European Commission would decide on the continuation of the process.

- Technical support and appropriate EC financing should be provided by TAIEX (EC/DG Enlargement).

ANNEXE 1

The extension of the Single European Sky to South East of Europe and the application of the Functional Airspace Block approach to the airspace of the region.

5. 1 BACKGROUND

The implementation of the Single European Sky regulations has started throughout the European Union. Its aim is to promote a more efficient and safer organisation of the European airspace. As the airspace is a continuum, it is desirable to extend the Single European Sky to European third neighbouring countries.

The current organisation of the airspace over the Western Balkans could be improved with a view to facilitating the development of a consistent and efficient air traffic management system in the region so as to face the increasing air traffic in this part of Europe.

The European Union has initiated several actions that may assist in addressing some of the difficulties of air traffic management in the Western Balkans. The discussions on a European Common Aviation Area open the way towards the early implementation of the principles underlying the Single European Sky in the region. In addition the European Commission's initiative to extend Trans-European Networks to neighbouring states provides further opportunities to facilitate infrastructure and organisational improvements.

6. 2 THE FUNCTIONAL AIRSPACE BLOCKS APPROACH

The Single European Sky offers the opportunity to give priority to the operational requirements of air transport development, in particular by implementing the **Functional Airspace Block concept** which is based on a more integrated cooperation between air traffic control service providers in managing traffic flows, regardless of national boundaries. Such a co-operative approach would in no way interfere with the question of national sovereignty, as States retain full responsibility to endorse any agreement. The Single European Sky recognises full sovereignty of States over their respective airspace in the same way than ICAO does.

A joint approach should allow building up the local and regional air transport infrastructure by sharing ground facilities, technical assets, human resources and training facilities. This should be done taking fully into account the current Air Traffic Management cooperation under development, including the Air Traffic Management Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe (ACE) and the Central Europe Air Traffic Services Organisation (CEATS). Furthermore the European Commission could provide some financial support by extending the mandate of current programmes such as ASATC/CARDS or by creating specific instruments.

This approach needs to be carried out in a mid-term perspective but will also enable to rapidly obtain concrete progress towards optimising airspace configuration in the region, including the re-opening of the airspace currently restricted for civil use. To

this purpose, technical and provisional arrangements should be based on the characteristics of traffic flows rather than boundaries, and the procedures should rely on the current air traffic control facilities locally and regionally in place. Those provisional operational arrangements should be politically and economically beneficial to all parties.

7. 4 THE PROCESS

- 7.1.** The Directors General of Civil Aviation of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, the former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia and the UNMIK (“the Directors General”) should decided to review opportunities with a view to implementing the Functional Airspace Block approach in the South East of Europe in consistency with the rest of European air traffic management network. The European Commission, the Stability Pact for South East of Europe, Eurocontrol and ICAO would be fully associated to this initiative.
- 7.2.** A Working Group should be created to support this task. The Group will be comprised of representatives of the Directors General, the European Commission, the Stability Pact, Eurocontrol, NATO and ICAO and could be open to other States and international organisations as decided by the Group. The tasks of the Working Group are presented in Annex.
- 7.3.** The Working Group should be requested to provide a first report on the opportunities for the application of the Functional Airspace Block approach by the end of 2005. On the basis of this report, the Directors General together with the European Commission will decide on further tasks to be given to the Working Group and on the continuation of this process.

Annex 2

Tasks of the Working Group

The Working Group should:

- Examine the current ATM situation and constraints in the region, and the associated impact on the expected traffic flows, evaluate what benefits will be gained from more integrated and less restricted ATM, taking into account existing initiatives on regional co-operation (ACE, CEATS);
- Identify key issues arising from the development of Functional Airspace Blocks in the region. The report on FABs to be released by Eurocontrol in May 2005 should be considered as a reference in this regard.
- Evaluate possible cooperation on technical and operational matters in the region.
- Propose a strategy to implement a FAB with an associated general action plan;
- Propose timetable and expected deliverables;
- Propose working arrangements;
- Identify supporting measures required for the successful conclusion of this initiative;
- Issue a report on the opportunities for the application of the FAB approach to the Directors General of Civil Aviation by the end of 2005.