

**Fortieth Meeting of the
Informal South Pacific ATS Coordinating Group
(ISPACG/40)**

**Brisbane, Australia
5-7 May 2026**

Agenda Item 4: Information and Working Papers

Future Communications in the APAC Region

Presented by: Colleen Kitson (Airservices Australia)

SUMMARY

The GANP positions data link as a key enabler for future communications and surveillance in Oceanic and Remote airspace. ATSP and industry collaboration together with regional planning could harness the end-to-end benefits and opportunities provided by data link.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP) Portal (Doc 9750, Sixth Edition) continues to position data link as a key enabler for future communications and surveillance in oceanic and remote airspace. Data link, including Controller–Pilot Data Link Communications (CPDLC) and Automatic Dependent Surveillance–Contract (ADS-C) supports performance-based communication and surveillance (PBCS) specifications which in turn support reduced separation and improved efficiency. Data link fitment underpins ICAO initiatives such as Trajectory Based Operations (TBO) and Project 30/10¹.
- 1.2 In some international oceanic and remote airspace, such as the north Atlantic and parts of Canada, Air Traffic Services Providers (ATSPs) already support the use of satellite voice communications. Work is also underway to implement ICAO provisions for space-based VHF communications.
- 1.3 As High Frequency (HF) radio systems age and traffic numbers grow, there is an opportunity in the South Pacific to plan for the adoption of future forms of communication technology to support more efficient ATC-pilot communications and reduced separation standards, improving safety, capacity and reducing delays. Other benefits for industry include the potential for reduced HF fitment and Minimum Equipment List (MEL) relief for HF unserviceability.

2. DISCUSSION

¹ Project 30/10 is an ICAO initiative aimed at increasing airspace capacity and safety by implementing reduced longitudinal separation standards (30 NM) and lateral separation (10 NM) in oceanic and remote areas. The project, active in regions like Africa (AFI) and Asia-Pacific (APAC), aims to boost efficiency and safely accommodate more aircraft.

2.1 ICAO and the GANP

The latest GANP (Portal/Doc 9750, Sixth Edition) provides expectations the use of data link for safe and efficient operations in oceanic and remote airspace where VHF voice and radar coverage are limited. Implementation planning is expected to prioritise interoperable, end-to-end air-ground data link services supporting CPDLC for ATS communications and ADS-C for surveillance and position/intent reporting.

2.2 ICAO also promotes regional harmonisation of data link operations, including CPDLC message sets, operational use and transition arrangements that are required to maintain seamless operations across FIR boundaries and to ensure resilient fallback i.e. voice, in case of data link degradation or outage.

2.3 Importantly, whilst data link is already implemented in many FIRs, implementation of data link *as a principal form of communications* could widely impact both ATSPs and industry and will require regional planning. As an example, the fitment of airline fleets operating in the oceanic airspace around Australia is between 70% to 90%. Individual fleets may vary as much as 50% to 100%, indicating impacts may be varied.

2.4 Benefits

The benefits of data link fitment could be accessed through multiple avenues:

- Initially:
 - Aircraft HF fitment/ MEL relief when data link is fitted.
 - Priority access to airspace such as FL360-FL390 for data link fitted aircraft
 - Reduced delays through access to more efficient separation standards
 - Increased capacity for oceanic airspace
 - Increased safety through direct ADS-C emergency indications with ATC.
- Medium term, additional benefits may include:
 - Space-based VHF or SatVoice alternatives may preclude the fitment of HF
 - Access to new ICAO separation standards currently under development
 - Further airspace capacity and delay improvements.
- Longer term, additional benefits may include:
 - ATSP system automation:
 - Efficiencies such as automated frequency transfers, automated airways clearance delivery and other clearances such as STARs
 - Direct access to cockpit data eg for top of climb and descent points etc.
 - Implementation of Trajectory Based Operations (TBO).

2.5 Planning

Critical areas for planning may include:

- Agreed operational concept, including implementation options for stages, trials and target dates
- ATSP/Industry consultation and lead times for ground- and aircraft-based equipment installations, ATC/pilot training
- Consideration of State approvals and oversight
- Designation of routes or route segments for PBN, PBC and PBS specifications, as appropriate.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

- 3.1 The meeting is requested to consider the content of this paper and discuss as necessary.

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