

# Global Action Plan for the Prevention of Airborne Conflict (GAPPAC)

## Initiative Organisational Framework



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## Executive Summary

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The Global Action Plan for the Prevention of Airborne Conflict (GAPPAC) is a collaborative, non-regulatory safety initiative designed to reduce mid-air collision risk through coordinated system-level analysis, co-creation of safety knowledge, and harmonised safety recommendations.

Anchored within the ICAO framework and aligned with the Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP) and the Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP), GAPPAC complements the successful GAPPRI and GAPPRE initiatives by addressing the third major high-risk occurrence category that demand synchronised action across operational, technical, and institutional domains. Together, these three categories represent the most critical accident prevention challenges, requiring sustained collaboration among regulators, ANSPs, operators, aerodromes, manufacturers, and the research community.

GAPPAC responds to growing operational complexity driven by traffic growth, mixed airspace use (including State aircraft and unmanned operations), evolving safety technologies and safety nets, and increasing demands on human performance. Through an integrated Working Group process supported by Steering Committee oversight, the initiative consolidates evidence from accident and serious incident investigations, integrates validated stakeholder findings, and translates these insights into system-level prevention strategies.

The expected outputs include an aligned set of airborne conflict prevention recommendations, supporting implementation guidance, explanatory safety material, and shared knowledge resources. These deliverables support States and organisations in strengthening Safety Management Systems and State Safety Programme, enhancing operational resilience, and improving harmonised global safety performance while respecting national responsibilities and organisational autonomy.

The initiative is supported by a common analytical framework that ensures systematic risk identification, cross-domain alignment, and traceable development of evidence-based recommendations.

# 1 Context and Purpose

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Over recent decades, global aviation has achieved remarkable safety performance. Yet the risk of mid-air collision (MAC) remains among the most severe and least forgiving threats to flight safety. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) identifies MAC as one of the five Global High-Risk Categories of Occurrence, requiring continued action to mitigate the risk of aviation fatalities. While such accidents are rare, each event carries catastrophic consequences—typically hull loss, multiple fatalities, and collateral damage on the ground.

The airborne conflict risk landscape is evolving. Increasing traffic density, greater operational diversity, uneven deployment of modern safety nets, and the introduction of new entrants are collectively reshaping risk exposure and system resilience. Maintaining and strengthening the world’s safety record now requires a coordinated, global, and forward-looking action.

GAPPAC is conceived in the spirit of GAPPRE (runway excursions) and GAPPRI (runway incursions), completing the triad of occurrence categories that demand synchronised action across operational, technical, and institutional domains. Together, these three categories represent the most critical accident prevention challenges, requiring sustained collaboration among regulators, ANSPs, operators, aerodromes, manufacturers, and the research community.

Firmly anchored within the ICAO framework, GAPPAC is intended to complement the Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP) and the Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP) by providing a more granular, system-level understanding of airborne conflict risk. The initiative will focus on modelling resilient performance, identifying systemic vulnerabilities, and promoting practical, evidence-based solutions across regions and operational environments.

Preventing airborne conflict cannot be achieved in isolation. The rising complexity of risk factors—spanning technology, human performance, and mixed operations—demands an approach that transcends national and organisational boundaries. GAPPAC will bring together key stakeholders under an independent and impartial framework, ensuring technical rigour, neutrality, and continuity of effort.

## 2 Rationale for GAPPAC

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### 2.1 Escalating Collision Risk with Rising Traffic

As air traffic continues to grow across all domains, the potential for airborne conflict expands at a rate that exceeds simple traffic growth. The following factors illustrate how this acceleration in exposure is reshaping systemic risk:

- Global air traffic, including commercial, general aviation, unmanned and high-altitude operations, is projected to double within the next 20 years.
- The probability of mid-air collision increases faster than linearly with traffic density due to growing interaction between flight trajectories.
- The severity of mid-air collisions remains extreme, typically resulting in total hull loss and multiple fatalities.
- As commercial operations extend into airspace where separation is not universally provided (for example, Class E airspace), exposure to collision risk increases, reinforcing the need for harmonised safety assurance across operating environments.
- Growing congestion in regional and cross-border routes requires renewed attention to collision risk, coordinated safety architecture, and system-wide mitigation strategies.

### 2.2 Evolving Use of Airspace: Diverse Users and Flight Rules

The global airspace system is transitioning toward mixed operations, where multiple categories of users coexist under differing rules and performance levels. This transition introduces several structural challenges that shape how airborne conflict risk must be managed:

- Airspace is increasingly shared among commercial airlines, general aviation, drones, high-altitude and near-space platforms, and State aircraft operating under different flight rules and governance structures.
- This diversity creates both integration challenges (harmonising rules, surveillance performance, and separation standards) and segregation challenges (ensuring safe separation between incompatible operations).
- Effective risk management requires continuous monitoring, adaptive procedures, and robust civil–military coordination, particularly near restricted or temporarily reserved airspace.
- Because ICAO’s mandate over State and certain high-altitude operations is limited, global partnership and industry leadership are essential to ensure consistent safety assurance across the overall safety architecture.

## 2.3 Challenging Assumptions in Safety-Critical Technologies and Safety Nets

Aviation safety relies on a set of enabling technologies whose integrity is increasingly under pressure. The following areas illustrate how long-standing safety assumptions related to navigation, communication, surveillance, and safety nets are being challenged:

- Safety nets such as ACAS and STCA remain essential but are increasingly stressed by mixed equipage, non-cooperative users, and uneven implementation.
- Navigation systems, particularly GNSS-based systems, face growing exposure to radio-frequency interference, challenging the continuity and integrity of positioning, routing, and timing functions.
- Communication networks reliant on data links and digital channels must address latency, cybersecurity, prioritisation, and resilience, particularly in degraded or congested operational environments, including reception limitations at low altitude.
- Surveillance systems, including ADS-B and multilateration, have improved situational awareness but introduced authenticity and data-origin concerns, especially when integrating non-certified data sources. In addition, reliance on transponder-based surveillance introduces a potential single point of failure with catastrophic consequences that is not fully reflected in current assurance.
- Spectrum and infrastructure capacity constraints, such as increasing interrogation rates and congestion in the 1090 MHz environment, may affect the performance and reliability of surveillance and airborne safety systems.
- Sustaining safety performance requires improved redundancy strategies, cross-domain data assurance, and coordinated performance monitoring among regulators, ANSPs, and industry providers to ensure systems remain fit for purpose in an evolving environment.

## 2.4 Strains on Human Performance

Human performance remains the cornerstone of operational safety. However, increasing workload, fatigue, and the continuous demands of adaptation related to competencies, technological proficiency, generational transition, and evolving modes of work are placing growing strain on performance sustainability:

- The transformation of airspace operations and the accelerating pace of automation are increasing demands on operational personnel, including controllers, pilots, and maintenance teams.
- Rising traffic density, time and efficiency pressures, and system complexity increase cognitive workload, fatigue, and the risk of human error.

- The shift toward automation and digital coordination is changing how personnel maintain situational awareness and share mental models.
- Emerging skill requirements and generational transitions require modernised training, mentoring, and competency frameworks.
- Sustaining performance depends on continuous monitoring of human factors, explicit workload measurement and management, effective fatigue management, and adaptive training solutions that support professionals through ongoing technological and organisational change.

## 2.5 Unlocking Implementation and Innovation

Many safety improvements already exist, but progress remains uneven across regions and operational environments. Achieving global consistency requires innovation focused on accelerating deployment of proven solutions through new business models, shared funding approaches, and coordinated adoption frameworks. The following factors highlight the structural conditions that shape how safety improvements are implemented and scaled across the global aviation system:

- The primary challenge for aviation safety today lies not in invention, but in implementation — speeding proven technologies and procedures into consistent, network-wide practice.
- Uneven deployment of essential systems (for example ground-based safety nets, airborne collision avoidance systems, conflicting clearances and trajectory deviation alerting, advanced surveillance, and digital data-sharing) reflects financial, regulatory, and institutional barriers.
- Many effective solutions originate locally within ANSPs, research programmes, or airports, but lack structured mechanisms for cross-adoption and large-scale replication.
- Unlocking innovation requires collaborative implementation frameworks, shared funding mechanisms, and incentives for early adopters to ensure that safety improvements benefit all regions and user groups, not only the most resourced.

## 3 Objectives and Expected Outcomes

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### 3.1 Objectives

The primary objective of GAPPAC is to support the global aviation community in reducing airborne conflict risk through the co-creation of coordinated, system-level safety recommendations and guidance.

Building on collaborative principles established by GAPPRI and GAPPRE, GAPPAC seeks to strengthen cross-domain alignment, promote shared safety ownership, and enhance proactive risk management across stakeholders through the following objectives:

- Identify systemic risk drivers and recurring safety themes associated with airborne conflict events and precursors.
- Facilitate structured collaboration between operational, technical, regulatory, and manufacturing stakeholders.
- Develop harmonised safety recommendations addressing airborne conflict prevention as a system-of-systems challenge.
- Promote consistent application of evidence-based best practices across regions and operational environments.
- Support proactive safety management through shared learning and collective risk awareness.

### 3.2 Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes from the GAPPAC initiative include:

- A consolidated set of system-level airborne conflict prevention recommendations.
- Supporting implementation guidance material enabling practical adoption.
- Explanatory safety material outlining underlying risk mechanisms and contributing factors.
- A shared knowledge base derived from accident and serious incident analysis and stakeholder contributions.
- Insights into safety monitoring approaches, supporting both retrospective measurement and proactive identification of emerging risk patterns.
- Enhanced alignment between stakeholders on airborne conflict prevention priorities and mitigation strategies.

## 4 Scope and Boundaries

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### 4.1 Scope

GAPPAC focuses on airborne conflict prevention within civil aviation, with particular emphasis on and limited to commercial passenger air transport. The initiative addresses conflict risk across both controlled and uncontrolled airspace environments, recognising that hazards may arise in airspace where separation services are provided and in environments where separation is not systematically assured.

The GAPPAC Scope includes airborne conflict events and precursors involving passenger civil commercial aircraft and:

- Other aircraft, airspace users, operations not fully covered by existing ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs), unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), and high-level airspace users.
- Operational hazards occurring in or near danger, restricted, prohibited, temporary segregated, or temporary reserved airspace.

### 4.2 Boundaries

GAPPAC is a non-regulatory safety improvement initiative and does not supersede existing regulatory provisions, operational procedures, or standards established by States and organisations.

GAPPAC does not conduct independent accident or incident investigations and does not replace the role of official investigation authorities.

The initiative does not collect confidential raw operational data from participating organisations; inputs are about risk findings and best practices; contributions are voluntary and may be shared in validated, aggregated, or anonymised form.

GAPPAC does not establish mandatory operational requirements, technical specifications, or certification standards.

Military-only operations conducted exclusively outside civil aviation airspace are outside the primary scope, except where interactions with civil traffic or shared airspace environments are involved.

The initiative does not address deliberate hostile acts outside the context of airspace operational safety management.

## 5. Alignment with ICAO Global Frameworks

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GAPPAC is designed to operate in direct alignment with ICAO's Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP) and Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP).

In relation to GASP, GAPPAC supports global safety objectives by strengthening hazard identification, systemic risk understanding, and coordinated mitigation strategies related to airborne conflict prevention. The initiative contributes to proactive safety management principles promoted under ICAO Annex 19 and State Safety Programme frameworks.

In relation to GANP, GAPPAC addresses airborne conflict risks associated with evolving operational concepts, increased traffic density, mixed airspace operations, and deployment of modern CNS/ATM technologies. The initiative provides operationally focused safety insights that support safe implementation of airspace modernisation and performance-based concepts.

Through this dual alignment, GAPPAC acts as an enabling mechanism linking ICAO strategic safety priorities with practical system-level safety implementation.

The alignment of GAPPAC with the ICAO global framework will be reflected through the use of an "In coordination with" designation on the cover page. Regional and major national regulatory authorities may similarly reference their respective frameworks and be reflected accordingly.

## 6. GAPPAC Collaborative Process Architecture

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GAPPAC operates through four interconnected thematic workstreams. These workstreams function as coordinated process components rather than isolated silos. They are designed to operate sequentially in logic, while overlapping in time and incorporating continuous feedback loops to support adaptive system-wide safety improvement. The model protects confidentiality boundaries and allows participating organisations to contribute knowledge without direct data transfer obligations.

### 6.1 Workstream 0 — Analytical Framework and Risk and Resilience Mapping Backbone

Workstream 0 provides the analytical backbone that enables consistent, systematic, and evidence-based collaboration across all GAPPAC workstreams. It establishes a common analytical structure to identify airborne conflict risk drivers, map system vulnerabilities, and support resilience-oriented prevention strategies.

The GAPPAC Analytical Framework is designed as a living reference architecture. It provides a structured risk and resilience map and analytical inventory that supports harmonised interpretation of safety evidence, consistent formulation of findings, and traceable development of recommendations.

By operating across all workstreams, the framework ensures consistent risk and resilience identification, aligned safety analysis, structured mapping of best practices, and evidence-based recommendation development.

Through a shared analytical language and reference structure, Workstream 0 supports cross-stakeholder alignment and coherent system-level understanding.

The framework remains adaptable and scalable, enabling integration of emerging operational concepts, technologies, and evolving risk patterns while preserving analytical consistency.

*Note: The analytical framework does not constitute a quantitative risk model and does not prescribe specific risk acceptance criteria, safety targets, or numerical assessments. Instead, it supports structured reasoning, comparison, and dialogue by clarifying relationships, dependencies, and areas of focus across the GAPPAC subject-matter domain.*

### 6.2 Workstream 1 — Evidence Base (Initiative Data Stream)

This workstream forms the foundational evidence layer of the initiative and is based primarily on publicly available and shareable material, including ICAO Annex 13 accident and serious incident investigation reports, public safety databases, safety bulletins, occurrence trend information, and open-source operational safety material relevant to airborne conflict prevention.

For practicality and confidentiality reasons, participating organisations are not required to provide raw operational data to this workstream.

Partners participating in this workstream may initiate their own evidence studies, draw on existing ones, and also explore and report on the use and comparison of various airborne conflict risk metrics.

### **6.3 Workstream 2 — Safety Findings and Insights**

This workstream consolidates safety findings derived from analysis of Workstream 1 and from direct contribution of validated findings from participating organisations, including internal studies, investigations, safety assessments, hazard identification processes, and operational safety reviews. The objective is to identify recurring safety themes, systemic vulnerabilities, cross-domain risk patterns and findings about resilience.

### **6.4 Workstream 3 — Action Opportunities and Recommendation Development**

This workstream translates consolidated safety findings into practical improvement opportunities. Inputs include analytical interpretation of findings from Workstream 2 and direct contribution of proven mitigation strategies and best practices from participating organisations. A structured alignment process is then applied to produce harmonised GAPPAC recommendations reflecting collective agreement.

### **6.5 Temporal Overlap and Feedback Loops**

Although the workstreams are logically sequenced, they operate with intentional temporal overlap and feedback loops. Findings development may begin while evidence collection continues, and action development may progress in parallel with ongoing analytical refinement.

## 7. Working Group Collaboration Model

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To support the development of coherent system-level safety recommendations, GAPPAC adopts a Working Group collaboration model that prioritises early cross-domain integration while preserving flexibility for stakeholder-specific activities at later stages.

### 7.1 Rationale

Airborne conflict prevention involves tightly coupled interactions between air traffic management, flight operations, aircraft systems, procedures, training, and regulatory frameworks. Experience from previous initiatives has shown that early segmentation of participants by stakeholder group can unintentionally reinforce domain-specific perspectives and delay identification of systemic interactions. An integrated collaboration approach during the initial phases is intended to promote shared situational understanding, joint ownership of safety challenges, and early alignment on cross-cutting risk drivers.

### 7.2 Collaboration Structure

During the initial analytical and alignment phases, the Working Group will operate as an integrated multi-stakeholder forum. Participants will collaborate in plenary and facilitated thematic sessions organised around safety themes rather than organisational segments. The integrated phase supports a shared system-level safety picture and aligned cross-domain recommendations.

### 7.3 Collaboration Cycle Operation

GAPPAC activities will be conducted through consecutive collaborative work cycles coordinated by the GAPPAC Initiative Leads (see section 13). Each cycle will typically be four weeks in duration and will be used to collect targeted thematic inputs from participants.

### 7.4 Alignment Milestone

Once the core set of system-level recommendations has been collaboratively developed and aligned, a formal alignment will be established. The agreed recommendation package is consolidated as the official GAPPAC baseline output.

### 7.5 Follow-on Stakeholder Extension Option

Following the alignment milestone, participating stakeholder groups may undertake additional segment-focused activities to develop complementary recommendations, implementation guidance, best practices, or domain-specific (e.g., ANSP, aircraft operators, manufacturers) supporting material, provided alignment with the agreed system-level framework is maintained and supplementary outputs do not contradict core recommendations.

## 8. Roles and Governance Structure

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Overall coordination of GAPPAC is performed by the Flight Safety Foundation. GAPPAC operates through a dual-structure governance model consisting of a multi-stakeholder Working Group and a Steering Committee. This structure is designed to ensure technical robustness, collaborative participation, strategic oversight, and transparent decision-making.

GAPPAC membership is coordinated by the GAPPAC Initiative Leads (see section 13) and is open to eligible organisations typically including aircraft operators, ANSPs, regulators, manufacturers, CNS and ATM infrastructure providers, CNS providers, investigation authorities, applied research organisations, industry associations, and relevant international organisations. Membership participation is based on active contribution to successive collaboration cycles, including engagement with the evidence base and submission of feedback and proposals, with continued membership normally requiring that organisations do not remain inactive for more than two collaboration cycles.

### 8.1 Role of the Working Group

- Perform the collaborative process across the Evidence Base, Findings, and Action Opportunities workstreams.
- Contribute expertise and operational knowledge; participate in joint analysis and validation of safety insights.
- Share best practices, mitigation strategies, and improvement initiatives.
- Support development and refinement of proposed safety recommendations.
- Support development and refinement of proposed guidance and explanatory material.

### 8.2 Role of the Steering Committee

- Oversee the proper functioning and integrity of the GAPPAC process framework.
- Support alignment with initiative objectives and global aviation safety priorities.
- Provide strategic guidance on scope and prioritisation at key milestones.
- Review and endorse consolidated workflow outputs, including findings and final recommendation packages.

*Note: Endorsement confirms that outputs reflect appropriate process application and stakeholder alignment, without implying regulatory approval or legal obligation.*

### 8.3 Governance Interaction Model

The Working Group generates technical content and proposals, while the Steering Committee provides oversight, alignment, and formal validation at defined milestones. This interaction model ensures both operational credibility and strategic coherence.

## 9. Steering Committee Operating Arrangements

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The GAPPAC Steering Committee operates under a streamlined and collaborative working model designed to support effective oversight, strategic alignment, and timely coordination of initiative activities.

### 9.1 Meeting Frequency

The Steering Committee meets on a regular basis, typically quarterly, with additional ad-hoc meetings convened as required to support major deliverables and endorsement activities.

### 9.2 Meeting Mode

Meetings are primarily conducted online to enable broad international participation. In-person meetings may be organised when aligned with major GAPPAC plenary sessions or relevant international aviation safety events.

### 9.3 Engagement with Plenary Sessions

Steering Committee members participate in selected GAPPAC plenary meetings to maintain close alignment between strategic oversight and Working Group activities.

### 9.4 Leadership Roles and Secretariat Support

The Steering Committee is led by a Chair, supported by one or more Vice-Chairs. A Secretariat function supports coordination, documentation management, communication activities, and follow-up actions. The Steering Committee Chair and Vice-Chair team is proposed by the GAPPAC launching organisations, including ICAO, FSF, CANSO, and IATA.

### 9.5 Decision and Endorsement Approach

Coordination and endorsement activities are conducted using a consensus-based approach wherever possible. Decisions and endorsements will normally be taken during Steering Committee meetings based on the relevant agenda items. In exceptional or time-sensitive cases, the Chair may initiate a decision-making process by correspondence.

## 10. Status and Intended Use of GAPPAC Guidance

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GAPPAC guidance material is intended to support collaborative safety improvement across the aviation community. It is non-regulatory in nature and does not create legally binding obligations for States, aviation authorities, or operational stakeholders. GAPPAC outputs do not replace or override existing ICAO SARPs, national regulations, organisational procedures or mandatory safety requirements.

States and aviation organisations are strongly encouraged to give due consideration to GAPPAC outputs and to implement the guidance on a voluntary basis, as appropriate to their operational context.

Organisations, including regulators, are encouraged to review GAPPAC outputs, assess their relevance to local operational contexts, and apply proportionate safety actions where applicable, consistent with ICAO Annex 19 Safety Management principles.

## 11. Deliverables and Output Types

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GAPPAC produces a structured portfolio of safety improvement outputs, including:

- System-level safety recommendations for airborne conflict risk and resilience management.
- Supporting guidance and explanatory material.

## 12. Timeline

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GAPPAC activities will be implemented over a two-year period, commencing in 2026 and anticipated to conclude in 2027. The timeline is structured to support progressive development of safety findings, collaborative alignment, and delivery of consolidated outputs, while allowing sufficient time for expert engagement and validation.

The GAPPAC initiative will follow a phased implementation timeline, structured around key development and alignment milestones:

- 06 March 2026 – Initiative kick-off.
- Q3 2026 – Completion of evidence consolidation phase.
- Q4 2026 – Development of consolidated safety findings.
- Q2 2027 – Draft system-level recommendations.
- Q3 2027 – Final alignment and endorsement of the GAPPAC recommendation package.

The Working Group collaboration will combine in-person and remote engagements to balance operational efficiency with the need for high-quality technical exchange. The programme will include:

- One in-person Working Group meeting, scheduled for 9–10 June 2026 in Brussels, Belgium, serving as the primary collaborative alignment workshop and technical integration milestone.
- Four to five remote Working Group meetings during 2026 and early 2027, focused on evidence consolidation, thematic analysis, development of findings, and iterative refinement of draft recommendations.
- A final in-person capstone meeting in 2027 (date and location to be confirmed), dedicated to final alignment, endorsement preparation, and consolidation of the GAPPAC output package.

## 13. GAPPAC Initiative Leads

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GAPPAC initiative Leads are:

- Tzvetomir BLAJEV, FSF.
- John WENNES, CANSO.

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