IMPROVING AVIATION SAFETY THROUGH JUST CULTURE

Addressing the challenges in implementing just culture. From left to right: Chow Hock Lin, SIA Engineering Company, Capt Mok Hin Choon, President, ALPA-S, Kim Trethewey, Chief Technical Advisor COSCAP South East Asia, ICAO, Mark Reeves, Director, Asia-Pacific Office, FAA, Roderik van Dam, Chairman, Eurocontrol Just Culture Task Force, Tay Tiang Guan, Deputy DirectorGeneral, CAAS.

Aviation regulators and stakeholders have in recent years come to recognise the importance of nurturing a just culture where aviation professionals are encouraged to voluntarily and openly share information to enhance aviation safety. However, despite growing interest, it is still challenging when it comes to implementing just culture in many organisations as many fear the reporting of such information may prove to be self-incriminating. Difficulties in devising a corresponding disciplinary system to handle such violations also compound the challenge. With the aim of promoting the exchange of perspectives on the development in this area and discuss the challenges of implementing just culture in Asia. The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) recent Aviation Safety Forum was themed "Growing a Just Culture". The forum was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and brought together distinguished international experts and local aviation leaders including Roderick van Dam, Chairman, EUROCONTROL Just Culture Task Force, Kim Trethewey, Chief Technical Advisor COSCAP South East Asia,

Mark Reeves, Director of FAA Asia-Pacific Region, ,Capt Mok Hin Choon, President, ALPA-S and Chow Hock Lin, Vice President SIA Engineering Company.

Speaking at the forum, Mr Roderick van Dam, highlighted that "in light of the increasing criminalisation of aviation accidents and incidents, there is a need to strike a balance between prosecution and protection of individuals who have voluntarily shared safety information." The lively panel session moderated by Tay Tiang Guan, Deputy DirectorGeneral, CAAS, raised some thought-provoking perspectives on aviation safety by both panel members and the audience.

The forum agreed that there is a need to strike greater harmony between legal and regulatory governance as well as on-the-ground enforcement. Penalties meted out must also be applied practically and within context. For example, illegal acts that have resulted from human error need to be assessed differently from those committed with intent.

Yap Ong Heng, Director-General, CAAS, also shared that "organisations will have to nurture an environment of trust where people are willing to share safety-related information within the organisation, including mistakes that could have escaped detection, by protecting the information appropriately and dealing with issues fairly."

Additionally, all stakeholders including senior executives from local and international industry players, government agencies and academia, acknowledged the need to invest greater effort to foster a widespread culture of openness and information sharing.