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Subject : Supplementary Consultation Paper on Data Communication Services between Aircraft and Ground Stations Provided by Organizations other than Airports Authority of India – Inmarsat India PL Comments

Reference : TRAI Consultation Paper No. 12/2023

Dear Shri Akhilesh Kumar Trivedi,

Inmarsat India (“Inmarsat”), at this moment, respectfully submits its comments in the above-referenced proceedings.

In its role of satellite-based aviation safety service provider, Inmarsat recognizes the critical importance of the establishment of national-wide reliable aeronautical radiocommunications services for aviation safety purposes as mandated or recommended by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

Inmarsat reiterates its general view that, given the safety nature of the data communication services provided within spectrum allocated to the aeronautical mobile (route) services, the licensing regime and the frequency assignment should be based on administrative process. As stated in the original consultation in our input, as well as in many others, spectrum auction would conflict with the internationally regulated regime of the service and its radio frequencies.

In addition, another important aspect to be noted is the fact that the concerned frequency band is under consideration by the forthcoming ITU World Radiocommunication Conference 2023 (WRC-23 agenda item 1.7) to allow the use of the band by satellite services. In this respect, we draw attention to the position of the Indian Government expressed in international forums proposing “a new allocation in the range 117.975-137 MHz” for the aeronautical mobile-satellite (route) service.

In view of the expressed above, Inmarsat’s opinion is that the decision on how to regulate the use and assignment of the 117.975-137 MHz band for data communication services between aircraft and ground stations in India be postponed until the revised international regulatory framework has entered into force.

Inmarsat’s comments to the Questions contained in the TRAI Consultation Paper No. 12/2023 is contained in the following:

<p style="text-align: center;">TRAI Consultation Paper No. 12/2023</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Inmarsat's Comments</p>
<p>SQ1. In case it is decided to bring data communication services between aircraft and ground stations provided by organizations other than Airports Authority of India under service licensing regime, what should be the eligibility conditions for obtaining service licence for data communication services between aircraft and ground stations? Please provide a detailed response with justifications.</p>	<p>Only ATM service operating companies internationally and nationally recognized should be eligible.</p>
<p>SQ2: In case it is decided to auction the spectrum in the frequency range 117.975-137 MHz for Data Communication Services Between Aircraft and Ground Stations, -</p> <p>(a) What should be the eligibility conditions for participating in auction?</p> <p>(b) Whether the entire available spectrum in 117.975 - 137 MHz band at each airport/ ground station should be put to auction?</p> <p>(c) What should be the block size of spectrum and minimum bid quantity in terms of number of blocks?</p> <p>(d) What should be the spectrum cap for each airport/ ground station?</p> <p>(e) What should be the roll-out obligations associated with the assignment of spectrum at each airport/ ground station?</p> <p>(f) What should be the period of assignment of spectrum?</p> <p>(g) What should be the minimum period beyond which the spectrum acquired through auction may be permitted to be surrendered?</p> <p>(h) What should be the process and associated terms and conditions for permitting surrender of spectrum through auction?</p>	<p>Auction is not appropriate for this application.</p>

<p>Kindly provide a detailed response with justification in respect of each of the above.</p>	
<p>SQ3. In case of auction based and/or administrative assignment of spectrum, what should the payment terms and associated conditions for the assignment of spectrum for Data Communication Services between Aircraft and ground Stations relating to: (i) Upfront payment, (ii) Moratorium period, (iii) Total number of installments to recover deferred payments, and (iv) Rate of discount in respect of deferred payment and prepayment? Please support your answer with detailed justification.</p>	<p>No comments.</p>
<p>SQ4. Whether there are any other issues/suggestions relevant to the subject? The same may be submitted with proper explanation and justification.</p>	<p>The concerned frequency band is under consideration by the forthcoming ITU World Radiocommunication Conference 2023 (WRC-23 agenda item 1.7) to allow the use of the band by satellite services. In this respect, we draw attention to the position of the Indian Government expressed in international forums proposing “a new allocation in the range 117.975-137 MHz” for the aeronautical mobile-satellite (route) service. (see Note 1 below)</p>

Note 1 – ITU WRC-23 Agenda item 1.7 addresses the following

1.7 to consider a new aeronautical mobile-satellite (R) service allocation in accordance with Resolution 428 (WRC-19) for both the Earth-to-space and space-to-Earth directions of aeronautical VHF communications in all or part of the frequency band 117.975-137 MHz, while preventing any undue constraints on existing VHF systems operating in the aeronautical mobile (R) service, in the aeronautical radionavigation service, and in adjacent frequency bands;

Resolution 428 (WRC-19) – Studies on a possible new allocation to the aeronautical mobile-satellite (R) service within the frequency band 117.975-137 MHz in order to support aeronautical VHF communications in the Earth-to-space and space-to-Earth directions

Aeronautical mobile (Route) service (AM(R)S) and aeronautical mobile-satellite (Route) service (AMS(R)S) would represent two different radiocommunication services within the frequency band 117.975-137 MHz, with the same on-board cockpit avionics system (for aeronautical VHF communications) being used for ground and satellite communications. It is planned that the AMS(R)S would relay VHF communications operating under the AM(R)S over oceanic and remote areas, without modification to aircraft equipment.

ICAO is currently working on any potential interference between the AM(R)S and AMS(R)S, which could stem from the possibly significantly larger service area of the AMS(R)S compared to the AM(R)S, with a view to resolve it through the conventional ICAO frequency planning exercise, assigning frequencies to the satellite system over interested regions, to ensure compatibility between ground and satellite facilities.