



STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE

Review Report of the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji 2023 Annual Report



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
Parliamentary Paper No. 50 of 2025

April-May 2025

Table of Contents

Acronyms.....	3
Chairperson’s Foreword.....	4
Recommendations.....	5
1.0 Committee Remit and Composition.....	7
1.1 Committee Secretariat Team	8
2.0 Background and Terms of Reference	9
2.1 Procedure and Program.....	9
Public Submission (written and oral submission).....	9
3.0 Committee Deliberation and Analysis	10
3.1 Introduction	10
3.2 Summary of the 2023 Annual Report.....	11
3.2.1 Operational Overview.....	11
3.2.2 Operational Performance	13
3.2.3 Summary of Licensing, Certification and Approval Issued in 2023.....	15
3.2.4 Future Outlook.....	17
3.3 Committee Findings	18
4.0 Relevance to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	22
5.0 Conclusion	24
6.0 Committee Members’ Signatures.....	25
7.0 Annexure	26

Acronyms

Acronyms

ANS	- Air Navigation Services
API	- Advance Passenger Information
CAAF	- Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji
CEs	- Critical Elements
FAA	- United States Federal Aviation Administration
GNSS	- Global Navigation Satellite Systems
GPS	- Global Positioning System
GSD	- Ground Safety Department
ICT	- Information Communications Technology
ICAO	- Chicago Convention and the International Civil Aviation Organization
ICAO SARPs	ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices
MHMS	- Ministry of Health and Medical Services
MOR	Mandatory Occurrence Reporting system
NDB	- Non-Directional Beacon
PNR	- Passenger Name Record
PEL	- Personnel Licensing Office
RNP-AR	- Required Navigation Performance – Authorization Required
SCFAD	- Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence
SDG	- Sustainable Development Goals
SO	- Standing Order
SCD	- Standards and Compliance Department
VOR	- VHF Omnidirectional Range
USOAP	- Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme

Chairperson's Foreword

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (Committee) hereby submits to Parliament the Review Report of the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji 2023 Annual Report. The Committee was referred the CAAF 2023 Annual Report on 10 March 2025.

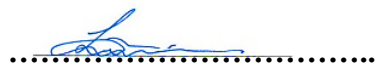
The Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji (CAAF) is the national aviation authority responsible for regulating and overseeing civil aviation in Fiji. Established under the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji Act 1979, CAAF ensures compliance with the Chicago Convention and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards. Its functions encompass certifying and licensing aviation entities, conducting surveillance, and fostering a safety and security culture within the industry. CAAF's mission is to partner with stakeholders to uphold the highest standards of safety, security, and efficiency in civil aviation, contributing to sustainable development and connectivity for Fiji and its people.

As part of its review process, the Committee had called for an oral public submission from CAAF on 09 April 2025 and conducted site visits at the ICAO's PSIDS Liaison Office, Nadi Air Traffic Management Centre (Operational and CNS technical) and the Nadi Control Tower. The Committee report is bi-partisan and has 14 recommendations for consideration. The Committee commends the CAAF for being up to date with its Annual Report.

At the outset, the Committee urges the Government and CAAF to modernize Fiji's aviation laws, ratify key international conventions, and establish an independent accident investigation body to enhance aviation safety and security. It also recommends strengthening regulatory enforcement, upgrading screening technologies, addressing talent retention, improving inter-agency data sharing, and supporting initiatives such as drone regulation, Sustainable Aviation Fuel, and health safeguards for aviation personnel. These measures aim to ensure alignment with international standards, address emerging threats, and build a resilient, efficient aviation sector.

The Committee thanks CAAF for compiling and submitting its 2023 Annual Report. I thank the members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, including the Hon. Alipate Tuicolo who served as an alternative member, for their contributions in producing this bipartisan report. I further acknowledge the Secretariat for their invaluable support throughout this review.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, I submit this report to Parliament.



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
Chairperson

Recommendations

1. The Committee recommends that the Government expedite the review and modernization of Fiji's aviation legislations to address current and emerging aviation threats, ensuring alignment with ICAO standards and enabling effective prosecution of serious offences (*reference to point 3.3.1*).
2. The Committee recommends that Government expedite the ratification of the Beijing Convention (2010), Montreal Protocol (2014), and the 2010 Protocol Supplementary to the Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft Convention to enhance legal preparedness and improve international aviation security standards (*reference to point 3.3.2*).
3. The Committee recommends that Fiji establish an independent and dedicated accident investigation body, equipped with necessary resources and expertise, to ensure timely and thorough investigations and compliance with ICAO's requirements (*reference to point 3.3.3*).
4. The Committee recommends that CAAF enhance resource planning and implement internal capacity-building programs to address the challenges in meeting service charter targets, ensuring efficiency in departments such as Aviation Security & Facilitation and Ground Safety (*reference to point 3.3.5*).
5. The Committee recommends that CAAF strengthen the enforcement of existing regulations through robust monitoring systems and better alignment between policy development and practical implementation (*reference to point 3.3.6*).
6. The Committee strongly recommends that CAAF enhance monitoring procedures and improve public awareness of the rules governing the carriage of firearms on aircraft to ensure better compliance and address potential security concerns (*reference to point 3.3.7*).
7. The Committee recommends that a formal system be put in place to encourage the reporting of any security protocol violations, particularly involving high-level individuals, to ensure transparency and accountability in maintaining aviation security standards (*reference to point 3.3.8*).
8. The Committee recommends that CAAF work with law enforcement and border control agencies to improve data-sharing and expand the use of the Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) systems to address drug smuggling through aviation channels (*reference to point 3.3.9*).
9. The Committee recommends that CAAF implement a targeted talent retention strategy that includes competitive salaries, training programs, and professional development initiatives to retain skilled aviation personnel (*reference to point 3.3.10*).
10. The Committee strongly recommends that CAAF revisit its domestic aviation security threat assessment protocols and upgrade screening technology at airports, adopting a more

anticipatory approach to address evolving transnational and domestic threats, especially with porous maritime borders (*reference to point 3.3.12 and 3.3.13*).

11. The Committee recommends that the Government expedite the introduction of updated drone legislation to address regulatory gaps, ensuring safe and responsible use of drones in Fiji's airspace (*reference to point 3.3.15*).
12. The Committee recommends that Fiji continue to support the development of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) infrastructure, investing in research and feasibility studies to make the transition to cleaner aviation fuel sustainable and cost-effective (*reference to point 3.3.16*).
13. The Committee recommends that CAAF establish a framework to monitor and assess secondary radiation exposure from aviation operations, particularly cosmic radiation, and ensure that health safety protocols are in place for aviation staff and the general public (*reference to point 3.3.17*).
14. The Committee recommends that CAAF assess its staffing levels and capacity, considering a more distributed workforce model to address the strain on resources and improve the effectiveness of inspections, audits, and safety oversight functions across Fiji's aviation sector (*reference to point 3.3.18*).

1.0 Committee Remit and Composition

Under Standing Order 109(2)(e) the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence is mandated to look into matters related to Fiji's relations with other countries, development aid, foreign direct investment, oversight of the military, and relations with multi-lateral organizations. The members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence are as follows:



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
Chairperson

*Deputy Speaker of Parliament
Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs*



Hon. Rinesh Sharma
Deputy Chairperson



Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Member

Assistant Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Heritage and Arts



Hon. Penioni Ravunawa
Member

Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services



Hon. Virendra Lal
Member

1.1 Committee Secretariat Team

Supporting the Committee in its work is a group of dedicated Parliament Officers serving as the Committee Secretariat. These officers are appointed and delegated by the Secretary-General to Parliament by Standing Order 15(3)(i). The Secretariat officers are as follows:

- Mrs. Susana Korovou – Senior Committee Clerk
- Mrs. Elesi Tabuyaqona – Deputy Committee Clerk

2.0 Background and Terms of Reference

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (the Committee), was referred the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji 2023 Annual Report on 10 March 2025. The referral of the Annual Report was done in accordance with SO 38(2), whereby the Committee was assigned to investigate the contents of the report and provide a report to Parliament at a future Sitting. This report is outside the usual mandate of the Committee, but the referral was made to help ease the workload of the other Standing Committees.

2.1 Procedure and Program

Public Submission (written and oral submission)

In relation to Standing Order 111 (1), the Committee is committed to upholding public trust in Parliament, by ensuring that there is public participation and that all such participation is given due consideration. The Committee had called for an oral public submission from CAAF on 09 April 2025 and conducted site visits at the ICAO's PSIDS Liaison Office, Nadi Air Traffic Management Centre (Operational and CNS technical) and the Nadi Control Tower.

A summary of the submission is provided in a later part of this report, under the heading 'Committee's Deliberation and Analysis'. Copies of the written submission and the verbatim from the meeting can be obtained from the online Appendices of this report, which can be accessed from the Parliament website: www.parliament.gov.fj.

3.0 Committee Deliberation and Analysis

3.1 Introduction

The Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji (CAAF) is the national aviation authority responsible for regulating and overseeing civil aviation in Fiji. Established under the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji Act 1979, CAAF ensures compliance with the Chicago Convention and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards. Its functions encompass certifying and licensing aviation entities, conducting surveillance, and fostering a safety and security culture within the industry. CAAF's mission is to partner with stakeholders to uphold the highest standards of safety, security, and efficiency in civil aviation, contributing to sustainable development and connectivity for Fiji and its people.

Fiji's journey in transforming commercial aviation began with its deep-rooted seafaring heritage, where traditional navigation by stars and ocean currents laid the foundation for innovation in air travel. This pioneering spirit led Fiji to collaborate with the United States Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in the early 1990s, offering its airspace for the groundbreaking trial of the Global Positioning System (GPS). Under the then leadership of CAAF CEO Jone Koroitamana and with technical guidance from Norman Yee, Fiji prepared its aviation sector to adopt GPS, ensuring pilot training, aircraft equipment upgrades, and the production of manuals. On April 15, 1994, Fiji became the first country in the world to integrate GPS into its air navigation system, positioning itself as a global leader in aviation modernization. This marked a historic shift from older navigation methods like VOR (VHF Omnidirectional Range), NDB (Non-Directional Beacon), and dead reckoning, and signaled the country's transition to advanced satellite-based systems.

The implementation of GPS and later GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite Systems) brought immediate benefits to Fiji's aviation industry, enhancing navigational accuracy, operational efficiency, safety, and fuel economy. It allowed the development of GPS routes, cloud break procedures, and streamlined pilot charts, drastically improving domestic air travel across Fiji's dispersed island geography. These advancements not only revolutionized Fiji's own aviation practices but influenced global standards, showcasing how a small Pacific Island nation could lead technological change in a critical sector. Fiji continues to embrace innovation, most recently approving the first RNP-AR (Required Navigation Performance – Authorization Required) approach into Nadi for Air New Zealand in 2020. This legacy of innovation reflects Fiji's enduring commitment to advancing both local and international aviation.

3.2 Summary of the 2023 Annual Report

3.2.1 Operational Overview

State Civil Aviation System and Aviation Safety and Security Oversight Functions

CAAF operates under Section 14 of the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji Act 1979 and is primarily responsible for executing civil aviation legislation, ensuring Fiji meets its international obligations under ICAO, and overseeing aviation safety and security. As the national safety and security oversight body, CAAF plays a critical role in regulating and maintaining high standards within the civil aviation sector. To effectively fulfill these responsibilities, CAAF must implement the eight critical elements (CEs) of a State Oversight System—essential tools that support the development and enforcement of safety and security policies and demonstrate the state’s capability in managing aviation oversight.

Organisational Structure (Critical Element 3)

In alignment with ICAO’s Critical Element 3, the CAAF maintains a structured organizational framework to effectively manage aviation safety and security. With 64 staff members at the start of 2023, CAAF operates across multiple departments including Air Safety, Personnel Licensing, Ground Safety, Aviation Security & Facilitation, Corporate Services, and Standards. This structure ensures CAAF is adequately staffed and resourced to fulfill its mandate as Fiji’s civil aviation regulator.

The Air Safety Department is divided into Airworthiness and Flight Operations sections, which handle tasks such as aircraft certification, maintenance oversight, airline approvals, drone regulation, and pilot training support. The Aviation Security and Facilitation Department is tasked with ensuring compliance with ICAO’s security standards across the aviation sector, including airport and airline operations. It also manages training programs to address local skill gaps in aviation security, reinforcing Fiji’s commitment to upholding international aviation safety and security standards.

Ground Safety Department (GSD)

The Ground Safety Department (GSD) at CAAF is divided into two sections: Aerodromes and Air Navigation Services (ANS). The Aerodromes section is responsible for certifying airports and approving helicopter and water landing sites, as well as supporting training in Airport Rescue Fire Services and electrical services. The ANS section oversees the certification of air navigation services in Fiji and the Nadi Flight Information Region, including air traffic management, search and rescue, and meteorological services, and collaborates with the Personnel Licensing Office on ANS training and licensing.

The Standards and Compliance Department (SCD), established in 2022, is responsible for ensuring Fiji's compliance with ICAO standards, as well as coordinating the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) for continuous safety oversight. Led by the Executive Manager, the department works to maintain and improve the state's aviation safety system by ensuring adherence to international standards and procedures, and it also handles the role of National Continuous Monitoring Coordinator to ICAO. Additional staff are expected to join the department in 2024 to further support these critical functions.

Corporate Services Department (CSD)

The Corporate Services Department at CAAF provides essential support for the organization's operational functions and is divided into three sections: Finance, Human Resources, and Information Communications Technology (ICT). The department is led by the Executive Manager of Corporate Services, who oversees these sections with the support of managers and staff.

The Finance Section manages CAAF's financial resources, ensuring proper budgeting, accounting, and financial reporting, as well as compliance with regulations and standards. It plays a crucial role in strategic decision-making and financial sustainability. The Human Resources Section focuses on recruitment, staff development, employee relations, and adherence to labor laws, fostering a positive work environment and supporting professional growth. The ICT Section ensures the smooth operation and security of CAAF's IT infrastructure, providing technical support and maintaining digital resources to help the authority achieve its operational and strategic goals.

Personnel Licensing Office (PEL)

The Personnel Licensing Office (PEL) at CAAF, led by the Manager of Personnel Licensing, is responsible for overseeing the training and licensing of aviation personnel. Supported by a team of Licensing Officers, Inspectors, and Administrative Assistants, the office operates in accordance with ICAO guidelines, specifically ICAO Doc 9379, Part 1. The PEL office handles five main functional areas: examinations, licensing, training, regulatory oversight, and administrative duties. It is responsible for certifying aviation training institutes, approving synthetic training devices, and licensing a wide range of aviation professionals, including pilots, aircraft engineers, air traffic controllers, and other technical personnel. Additionally, medical assessments for personnel are conducted by approved medical examiners.

Legal Unit

The Legal Unit at CAAF, led by Manager Legal & Enforcement, is responsible for managing legal matters and ensuring that CAAF operates in compliance with the law. In 2023, the unit expanded with the addition of two Legal Officers, enhancing its capacity to handle a growing workload. The unit's key responsibilities include regulatory reform, where it reviews and updates aviation regulations to align with international standards, and providing legal interpretation to ensure that CAAF's policies comply with civil aviation laws. Additionally, the Legal Unit oversees enforcement procedures, ensuring that breaches of aviation regulations are addressed appropriately, including preparing legal documentation and representing CAAF in legal proceedings, thus maintaining safety and security standards within Fiji's aviation sector.

Quality Unit

The Quality Unit at CAAF underwent restructuring in 2023, transitioning into an independent unit reporting directly to the Chief Executive and the Board Compliance Sub-Committee. This change highlights the increasing importance of quality assurance within CAAF's operations. The unit, led by the Quality Assurance Manager and supported by Quality Assurance Officers, focuses on documentation, statistics, and records to promote transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. It plays a key role in aligning quality assurance with the organization's strategic and operational decisions. In response to staff vacancies and the growing workload, CAAF has implemented retention strategies such as professional development, flexible work hours, wellness sessions, and improved salaries to attract and retain staff. Despite these efforts, CAAF continues to face challenges in recruiting key operational personnel, often engaging temporary staff or consultants to manage the workload and meet project deadlines.

3.2.2 Operational Performance

Primary Aviation Legislation and Specific Operating Regulations (Critical Element 1&2)

The implementation of ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) in Fiji is facilitated through a legislative framework that includes primary and secondary aviation legislation. This system is structured as a three-tier regulatory framework comprising Acts, Regulations, and Standard Documents to ensure compliance with ICAO SARPs. CAAF is currently reviewing and consolidating Fiji's civil aviation laws into a single document, the Civil Aviation Bill, which will combine the Civil Aviation Act 1976, the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji Act 1979, and the Civil Aviation Reform

Act 1999. Additionally, the Civil Aviation (Security) Act 1994 is being amended to include provisions for Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Records (PNR) to enhance security and counter threats such as terrorism and organized crime. The CAAF also ensures that the standards outlined in its documents align with ICAO's minimum safety and security requirements, continuously reviewing and updating them to incorporate new ICAO standards.

Funding for 2023 (Critical Element 3)

In 2023, CAAF faced a significant financial setback, recording a pre-tax loss of \$617,359, a sharp contrast to the previous year's profit of \$2,255,151. This loss stemmed from a decline in revenue and an increase in expenses. Despite these challenges, CAAF maintained core revenue sources such as departure taxes, government grants, and various fees. The government allocated a \$2.5 million grant for the 2022-2023 financial period, with \$5 million allocated for 2023-2024, of which 21% was received by the end of 2023. In response to financial pressures, CAAF has embarked on a significant digitalization initiative, focusing on automating services and improving oversight capabilities. This includes upgrading ICT infrastructure, implementing cloud backup solutions, and enhancing software for audits, investigations, accounting, and HR. Additionally, CAAF completed a major renovation of the Archives building to house the ICAO Pacific Liaison Officer, further supporting its collaboration with ICAO and the Pacific aviation community.

Technical Guidance Tools and Provision of Safety/Security Critical Information (Critical Element 5)

CAAF provides its technical personnel with the necessary facilities, up-to-date technical guidance, safety and security critical information, tools, and equipment to effectively perform their oversight functions. It also offers comprehensive technical guidance to the aviation industry on implementing relevant regulations. CAAF publishes various documents such as Guidance Material, Aeronautical Information Circulars (AICs), Airworthiness Notices, and Flight Safety Notices to ensure aviation safety and security. In 2023, CAAF developed and released several new guidance materials covering topics like aerodrome safety, flight inspection, and wildlife hazard management, among others. Additionally, the organization maintains Inspectors' Manuals to support its inspectors and ensures that AICs are regularly updated to reflect changes in regulations, with all resources accessible to aviation stakeholders and the public through the CAAF website.

Licensing, Certification, Authorisation, Approval and Surveillance Obligations (Critical Element 6 and 7)

CAAF is responsible for ensuring that individuals and organizations involved in aviation activities meet established requirements before being granted licenses, certificates, authorizations, or approvals. This is achieved through a documented process involving evaluations conducted by CAAF inspectors based on national requirements, with external specialists engaged when necessary. Certification is carried out through a formal, documented process, while authorizations follow a holistic risk-assessment approach to ensure safety and security. To maintain compliance, CAAF implements continuous surveillance through inspections, audits, and monitoring. Regular audits and evaluations are also conducted on aviation organizations, airports, and service providers to ensure adherence to safety and security regulations. Additionally, CAAF oversees the issuance of certificates and approvals in line with ICAO standards, fostering a culture of safety and excellence in Fiji's aviation sector. In 2023, CAAF completed surveys for new Fiji Airways' ports of call and conducted validation inspections at major international airports.

3.2.3 Summary of Licensing, Certification and Approval Issued in 2023

The table below summarizes the oversight activities related to certification and registration of key aviation infrastructure and service providers as reported in CAAF's 2023 Annual Report

Certification of Aerodrome Operators 22 <i>(refer table of certified aerodromes)</i>	International Aerodromes (2)	Fiji Airports
	Government Domestic Airports (13)	Fiji Airports
	Private Aerodromes (7)	Private Operators
Registration Approval of Helicopter Landing Sites 6 <i>(refer table of registered HLS)</i>	Private HLS (6)	Private Operators
Registration Approval of Water Landing Sites 3 <i>(refer table of registered WLS)</i>	Private WLS (3)	Private Operators
Certification of Air Navigation Service Providers 4 <i>(refer table of ANS Service providers)</i>	Aviation Meteorological Service Provider (AMSP) (1)	Fiji Meteorology Service
	Aeronautical Maintenance Organisation (AMO) CNS (1)	Fiji Airports
	Air Traffic Service Provider (ATSP) (1)	
	Aeronautical Information Service Provider (AISP) (1)	
Approval of Manual and Expositions 6	Air Navigation Service Providers and Aerodrome Operators	Fiji Airports Fiji Meteorology Service Private Operators

Source: CAAF 2023 Annual Report, page 26

Mandatory Occurrence Reports

In 2023, CAAF reinforced its commitment to aviation safety through a robust Mandatory Occurrence Reporting (MOR) system, aligned with ICAO Annex 13. A total of 328 MORs were received, with 249 requiring assessment or investigation, 169 of which were completed,

while 80 remained in progress into 2024. An additional 109 reports were recorded for statistical purposes. MORs covered a wide range of incident types, with the most common being bird strikes, system/component failures, and security-related issues. The reporting system promotes a proactive safety culture by encouraging all aviation stakeholders to report incidents without fear of reputational damage. The Quality Assurance Unit manages the Aviation Quality Database (AQD), ensuring all MORs are logged, assessed, and resolved efficiently, while also supporting internal and certification audits.

Enforcement Actions Taken

CAAF emphasizes voluntary compliance over punitive measures to uphold aviation safety and security, believing that individuals are generally rational and law-abiding. However, when voluntary compliance fails, enforcement actions become necessary. To enhance its ability to manage safety and security risks, CAAF is currently reviewing its enforcement policy to align with national laws and international standards. In 2023, enforcement actions included activating the enforcement process in six cases, issuing three suspension letters, three infringement notices, and five infringement letters, three of which were linked to 2023 enforcement and two resulting from a court judgment. No prosecutions were initiated, though there are pending civil and criminal judicial review cases.

Summary of CAAF's Performance Measurement for 2023

The performance data shows that most departments within the organization exceeded their activity targets for the year, demonstrating strong operational efficiency and goal achievement. Notably, Flight Operations, Finance, Human Capital, ICT, Safety Education, Standards & Compliance, Legal, and Quality Assurance Units achieved 100% of their targets. Airworthiness and Personnel Licensing also surpassed their targets (95.00%) with 99.87% and 97.60% achievement, respectively. However, two departments fell short: Aviation Security & Facilitation achieved only 41.47% of its target, significantly underperforming with over half (53.53%) of its target unmet, while Ground Safety narrowly missed its goal with a 96.25% achievement rate, falling short by 3.32%.

The Aviation Security & Facilitation and Ground Safety departments fell short of meeting their Service Charter targets due to operational challenges. Aviation Security & Facilitation implemented ambitious new goals, such as reducing security programme evaluation times from 30 to 10 days. However, the limited transition period, rising demand for certifications, and resource-intensive preparations for the ICAO USAP-CMA Audit hindered timely delivery. Ground Safety, meanwhile, struggled to meet its 20-day assessment target for airport-related developments due to the complex nature of coordination with multiple stakeholders such as architects and engineers, and the need for thorough site visits. Despite these setbacks, both departments remain committed to improving their performance moving forward.

3.2.4 Future Outlook

Looking ahead to 2024, CAAF is dedicated to advancing the nation's aviation sector through strategic initiatives focused on safety, security, efficiency, and stakeholder collaboration. Central to this effort is the strengthening of CAAF's regulatory framework to align with international standards, supported by streamlined processes, robust enforcement strategies, and a culture that prioritizes safety and security. Operational efficiency will be enhanced through internal process improvements, ICT infrastructure upgrades, and the development of a performance-based framework. Key technological initiatives include the implementation of an E-Examination system and an oversight management database to modernize certification and licensing processes. CAAF will also conduct a comprehensive manpower review and further develop its Standards and Compliance Department to reinforce regulatory oversight. Recognizing the importance of collaboration, CAAF aims to build strong partnerships with industry, government, and international stakeholders to foster a cooperative environment that supports sustainable growth in Fiji's aviation industry.

3.3 Committee Findings

The Committee's findings are outlined below:

3.3.1 Outdated and Inadequate Legislation

One of the central challenges facing CAAF is the outdated aviation legislation, some of which dates back to 1976. This has created a regulatory gap, especially when addressing modern aviation threats and obligations under international conventions such as those set by ICAO. Without updated laws, Fiji lacks the legal tools to prosecute serious offences like hijacking, as was the case in the 1987 incident. The process of reviewing and modernizing this legal framework, although ongoing, remains a critical and unresolved issue.

3.3.2 Lack of Ratification of Key International Aviation Treaties

Fiji has not yet ratified several important international aviation treaties, including the Beijing Convention (2010), the Montreal Protocol (2014), and the 2010 Protocol Supplementary to the Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft Convention. This delay limits Fiji's ability to incorporate essential aviation security provisions into national law, hindering the country's compliance with international security standards and weakening its legal authority in addressing transnational aviation crimes. These treaties address key issues such as aircraft used as weapons and the prevention of chemical, biological, or nuclear attacks via aviation. The absence of corresponding domestic legislation results in lower audit scores, particularly in areas such as legal preparedness, risk mitigation, and data systems like Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR). CAAF has worked with the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation to draft Cabinet papers, but the political process remains slow, delaying compliance and weakening legal standing in global aviation safety standards.

3.3.3 Gaps in Organisational Structures for Accident Investigation

Although Fiji has maintained a record of zero aviation fatalities from 2020 to 2023, there is a notable gap in having an established and independent accident investigation body. This is a crucial component of a robust aviation oversight system. The absence of such a group undermines Fiji's readiness to respond to and investigate future incidents, potentially impacting safety assurance and compliance with ICAO's critical elements.

3.3.4 Inactive National Committees for Aviation Policy and Facilitation

Another significant challenge is the dormancy of key national committees, the National Aviation Security Committee, the National Facilitation Committee, and the National Wildlife Committee. These multi-agency platforms are essential for

developing national aviation policy, coordinating inter-agency responsibilities, and implementing international standards. Their inactivity since around 2009 has weakened Fiji's ability to respond to evolving aviation needs and to improve facilitation and security performance ratings.

3.3.5 Challenges in Meeting Service Charter Targets in Key Departments

Operational difficulties within departments such as Aviation Security & Facilitation and Ground Safety also highlight internal challenges. Ambitious targets, limited transition periods, high workload, and external coordination demands have affected performance. These issues indicate a need for improved resource planning, process efficiency, and internal capacity building to meet service commitments.

3.3.6 Implementation and Enforcement of Regulatory Frameworks

While efforts are underway to strengthen regulations and align with international standards, effective implementation remains a challenge. The gap between policy development and actual enforcement has made it difficult for CAAF to fully realize the intended impact of its regulatory reforms. This includes ensuring that regulatory updates are not only passed but also effectively operationalized through compliance monitoring and enforcement.

3.3.7 Carriage of Firearms on Aircraft

A major public concern relates to the carriage of firearms on aircraft, whether by locals or foreign diplomats. Regulation 13 of the Civil Aviation Security Act allows firearms in the cabin for persons on official duty, provided they have approval from the Police Commissioner, CAAF, and the aircraft operator. Firearms can also be carried in the aircraft hold under N.R. 29, where they are inaccessible during flight. Although there are clear regulations, there has been at least one reported incident and potentially unreported ones. This raises the need for stronger monitoring, enforcement, and public clarity regarding these sensitive procedures.

3.3.8 Potential Bypassing of Airport Security by High-Level Individuals

Concerns were raised about possible bypassing of standard security protocols by politicians or high-level figures. While CAAF confirmed they had heard unsubstantiated claims, no formal reports have been submitted, making investigation difficult. The lack of documentation hinders transparency and accountability and highlights the need for a culture that encourages formal reporting of such incidents to uphold aviation security standards.

3.3.9 Addressing Drug Trafficking Through Aviation Channels

While aviation security primarily focuses on threats to aircraft such as explosives or weapons, concerns have grown about Fiji being used as a drug transit route. CAAF relies on collaboration with police and border agencies through systems like the Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) to address drug trafficking. However, due to limitations in local capability and reliance on international support (e.g., UNODC and UN Counterterrorism Office), Fiji faces challenges in proactively addressing this growing issue.

3.3.10 Talent Retention and Skill Development in Aviation

CAAF has historically struggled with high staff turnover, particularly among skilled technical personnel lost to overseas opportunities. However, recent strategies such as improved training, enhanced benefits (e.g. medical insurance, performance bonuses), long-service recognition, and staff engagement activities have helped reduce turnover to the lowest levels in a decade. A new scarcity framework is being developed to address salary competitiveness. Some former staff have returned, but the challenge of retaining highly skilled professionals remains.

3.3.11 Delays in CEO Appointment and Organisational Stability

CAAF operated for several years without a permanent CEO, which created uncertainty in leadership. The appointment of Ms. Teresa Leverstone as the first female CEO in 2023 brought renewed stability and trust. This leadership transition marks a positive step but also highlights the need for sustained leadership succession planning and governance consistency moving forward.

3.3.12 Gaps in Domestic Aviation Security and Porous Borders

A core concern raised was the lack of security screening at domestic airports, especially considering the rise in transnational crimes such as drug smuggling and human trafficking. CAAF maintained that based on current threat assessments, guided by intelligence from the Fiji Police Special Branch, the domestic aviation threat is negligible and does not justify deploying expensive screening technology across low-risk zones. However, some committee members strongly disagreed, warning that this reactive stance ignores the evolving complexity of transnational threats, especially with porous maritime borders and advanced technologies like 3D-printed weapons. There was consensus that threat assessment protocols need to be revisited with a more anticipatory approach.

3.3.13 Explosive Trace Detection and Screening Technology

There are mixed levels of screening technology in use at Fijian airports. While some screening equipment can detect explosives on passengers and their belongings, the

system relies on random sampling, which may not be sufficient for more sophisticated threats. Stakeholders are calling for upgrades to match international standards.

3.3.14 Land Development Challenges

CAAF owns land that is being planned for development to support self-sufficiency goals. However, this process is complicated by the presence of 54 settlers on the property. Legal processes are ongoing, and the situation is being handled confidentially. A master plan is also in progress but remains in early stages.

3.3.15 Drone Regulation and Legislative Gaps

There is increasing drone activity in Fiji, but CAAF's ability to regulate is hampered by outdated legislation. While commercial drone operators are licensed and regulated, many operate under exemptions, and enforcement is difficult. The lack of a comprehensive legal framework limits CAAF's regulatory reach.

3.3.16 Sustainable Aviation and Carbon Footprint

CAAF and national stakeholders have adopted ICAO's Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) framework. Fiji has a state action plan to monitor and reduce aviation emissions, with Fiji Airways already implementing SAF in limited flights. However, challenges remain regarding infrastructure, feedstock availability, and cost. A feasibility study on using local crops (e.g., cassava, sugarcane) for SAF is underway.

3.3.17 Radiation and Health Safety Concerns

Committee members inquired about radiation from aircraft and screening equipment. CAAF clarified that radiation emissions are regulated through international and national telecommunication frameworks, and current exposure levels are within safe limits. However, secondary (cosmic) radiation and its long-term health impacts are not actively monitored due to limited research and infrastructure in Fiji.

3.3.18 Human Resource Constraints

CAAF currently operates with 64 staff members based out of a single office in Nadi. Staff are deployed to various sites as needed, which may strain capacity for inspections, audits, and oversight functions across the country's aviation infrastructure.

4.0 Relevance to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

CAAF contributes to the following key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

SDG 5: Gender Equality

Gender equity is promoted through inclusive hiring practices and policy reforms. Women currently hold 50% of executive and 33% of senior management roles within the authority, showcasing CAAF's commitment to creating leadership opportunities and empowering women in the aviation industry.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

CAAF drives industry growth and contributes to quality employment by ensuring safe aviation operations. It regulates training and services that create skilled job opportunities, while fostering tourism and trade across Fiji, supporting broad-based economic development.

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

Innovation in aviation is a priority for CAAF, as evidenced by its efforts in enabling drone technology, cloud-based oversight, and advanced aviation security systems. By modernizing infrastructure, CAAF promotes resilient and efficient aviation networks, essential for sustainable growth.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

CAAF enhances connectivity to remote and underserved regions through certified aerodromes, heliports, and water landing sites. This improves access to vital services and economic opportunities for isolated communities, reducing regional disparities.

SDG 13: Climate Action

CAAF actively supports Fiji's climate goals by promoting sustainable aviation fuel, performance-based navigation, and emissions-reduction strategies. Its environmental oversight at coastal aerodromes also aligns with broader efforts to mitigate climate change impacts.

SDG 14: Life Below Water

In regulating seaplane operations and managing environmental standards at coastal airports, CAAF supports the protection of marine ecosystems. These practices help preserve the quality of Fiji's coastal and aquatic environments, essential for sustainable ocean use.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

By reviewing civil aviation laws and collaborating on security frameworks such as the Advanced Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) systems, CAAF strengthens legal and institutional structures. This fosters transparency, rule of law, and resilience within Fiji's aviation sector.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

CAAF advances its contributions to sustainable development through strong partnerships with international organizations like ICAO and regional stakeholders. It participates in global working groups, ensuring alignment with international standards and leveraging collective expertise to meet development goals.

5.0 Conclusion

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence has conducted a thorough review of the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji 2023 Annual Report. The Committee report is bi-partisan and has 14 recommendations for consideration. The Committee commends the CAAF for being up to date with its Annual Report.

6.0 Committee Members' Signatures



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
Chairperson



Hon. Rinesh Sharma
Deputy Chairperson



Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Member



Hon. Penioni Ravunawa
Member



Hon. Virendra Lal
Member

7.0 Annexure

Published evidence

Written evidence, transcripts, and supporting documents can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link:

<https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-foreign-affairs-and-defence/>