



ECAC Security Forum

Interview with **Urs Haldimann**
Swiss Federal Office of Civil Aviation (FOCA)

Urs Haldimann has been chairing the ECAC Security Forum since its creation in 2005. As his mandate is coming to a close (a new chair will be appointed in December), Mr Haldimann shares his reflections on the progress achieved in the 12 years of existence of this ECAC group.

What have been the Security Forum's main achievements since its creation?

Through the close and active involvement of experts from a large number of Member States, observers from other regions and States (in particular from Africa through AFCAC and WAEMU, Israel, Singapore and the United States), and – very importantly – also from the industry, we have succeeded in not only exchanging views but also launching debates on most pertinent subjects, such as behaviour detection, land-side security, effective and efficient communication and insider threat.

These debates are reflected in the conclusions of the Security Forum and initiate more detailed deliberations in the specialist task forces. Through this process, the common understanding of AVSEC priorities has risen throughout ECAC and this is quite an important achievement.

Additionally – although this is not an achievement of the Security Forum itself – I have noted a considerable increase in the participation of female experts in the meetings, which I consider a real added value. Around 9/11, security was clearly dominated by men and the percentage of women contributing to ECAC's work in security was very low. Today we have reached a share of nearly 50/50 in some meetings. Of course, this also reflects societal developments, but in an area like security this is a remarkable development that cannot be taken for granted.

You have been the chair of the Security Forum since day one. How have you seen this group evolve over the years?

The Security Forum was created by ECAC's Directors General in 2005 at the same time as the various ECAC security task forces.

I still remember when I was asked to present this new body in ECAC News in 2005/2006. At first I struggled to describe why such a body was really needed. It was meant to bridge the gap between the various ECAC task forces and experts from Member States who were not represented on them. I therefore stressed the Forum's role as a kind of plenary body which would discuss the work of specialist task forces and identify areas where further guidance and pragmatic solutions were required. I wasn't sure whether this concept would work, since the Forum was clearly lacking any decisional powers.

What is the main added value of the Forum (notably compared with other security groups)?

The lack of decisional powers – which at first sight appeared as a potential weakness – obliged the ECAC Secretariat and myself to reflect more deeply on the concept. It finally led to a "general store" concept, combining on the one hand the sharing of information from the various task forces and study groups (particularly with representatives who are not participating in those groups), and on the other hand, the possibility to discuss issues of common interest with colleagues without being immediately bound by certain statements. The idea was to build a real forum, in the true sense of the word, where ideas could be elaborated and tested in a laboratory-like atmosphere.

If we look at the active contribution of security experts from the entire ECAC region, from observers and industry representatives, as well as the impact of the Forum's conclusions on the direction of ECAC's work, I believe we have succeeded. Since the Romans brought the "forum" as a concept to perfection, I was particularly glad to have the chance to chair my last meeting in Rome.



24th Security Forum in Rome, October 2017

What are the main challenges for ECAC Member States that you see emerging/being discussed during Security Forum meetings?

When talking about new challenges in security, cyber security is normally mentioned quite soon. Fortunately, ECAC considered this threat at such an early stage that it was necessary to explain what it was all about and why it should be tackled. Thanks to the work carried out in this area, the aviation sector is today quite ahead of other sectors regarding measures to be taken against the cyber threat.

Although the ongoing work on this subject will have to continue, I consider another threat will be our main challenge in the near future: the insider threat. Such threat cannot be mitigated by a series of individual measures or technical solutions whose effectiveness can be verified easily. In fact, it requires a concept which includes elements of unpredictability, behaviour detection, background checks, vetting and appropriate communication, embedded in a robust security culture allowing the implementation of a sustainable security awareness programme.

How do you see the evolution of the Security Forum in the years to come?

The Forum will appoint a new chair in December and I am very confident that he or she will guide the work steadily through all kinds of future turbulence. I am glad to hand over the pilot stick at a phase where the Security Forum is considered as a well-established instrument in the AVSEC world and has its place on the agenda of most security experts.

As I said earlier, one of the strengths of the Security Forum is its flexibility with regard to the subjects it deals with, and the highly developed culture of debate. As it has grown over the last 12 years, the Forum will continue to evolve in the future, but ideally without attempting to pursue a fixed long-term concept for future developments. It would be a mistake to try to clearly determine today the direction it should take... In life, and particularly in aviation security, you never know what monster is hiding around the next corner. So we should remain flexible in order to tackle whatever monster may appear; or even better: surprise it from behind! ■



23rd Security Forum in Paris, 2017



21st Security Forum in Paris, 2016

Urs Haldimann began his career in 1984 in the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, dealing with different aspects of public international law, mainly in the transport sector. In 1993, he shifted the focus of his professional activities to civil aviation exclusively, starting to work with the Federal Office of Civil Aviation (FOCA). In his present position as head of the legal and international affairs section in FOCA, Mr Haldimann is responsible, inter alia, for setting the legal civil aviation framework in Switzerland and he is in charge of relations between Switzerland and international bodies such as ICAO, the EU and of course ECAC. Furthermore, he oversees facilitation and security policy issues. In this capacity, he was elected vice chairman of the Facilitation Panel of ICAO which was held in spring 2016 and he will hand over the chairmanship of the ECAC Security Forum in December 2017, after chairing the group since its creation in 2005. Mr Haldimann is also currently the chair of the ECAC Medium-Term Objectives Task Force.