



Korea, China, and Japan join hands for safer skies in the south of Jeju

- *Korea-China-Japan agree to establish new air route and traffic control system in the southern Jeju air corridor*
- *Enhancing air traffic safety by establishing Korea-China direct communications line and streamlining traffic control in sections with high risk*

- The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MOLIT, Minister: BYEON Chang-heum) announced that the aviation authorities of Korea, China and Japan have agreed on December 25, 2020, to gradually establish and operate a new air route and air traffic control system from March 25, 2021, to replace the current system on the air corridor located south of Jeju island which has been in operation since 1983.
- In January 2019, Korea, China, and Japan formed a working group with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and have engaged in close consultation on this issue ever since. The agreement reached on December 25, 2020 is a follow-up to the provisional agreement reported by the working group to the ICAO Council on November 27, 2019.

- Initially, the shift to the new air route system was planned to be made on April 23, 2020. However, due to the unexpected outbreak of COVID-19, follow-up discussions and negotiations were postponed, which, consequently, delayed implementation of the new system. The three countries resumed negotiations on this issue in writing and via video conference from May 2020, and were finally able to reach an agreement.

- Safety was the top priority considered in reaching the agreement, and the first phase of the agreement will be implemented from March 25.

- (Phase 1) Korea will take over Japan's role of controlling the airspace with relatively high aviation safety risk where east-west airways and north-south airways intersect, and dual airways will be established in the section connecting Korea to Japan.

- Regarding the airspace currently controlled by China, a direct communications line between the air traffic control authorities of Korea and China will be established in accordance with international regulations as soon as the official air traffic control agreement is signed between the two countries, thereby creating a fully cooperative system

for air traffic control.

- (Phase 2) The second phase of the agreement is tentatively scheduled to begin on June 17, and through further consultation between Korea and China, a new air route will be established for all sections of the corridor in the Incheon Flight Information Region (FIR) as initially reported to and agreed upon at the ICAO Council.

- The southern Jeju air corridor – also known as the “AKARA corridor”- has remained a long-standing problem of the international aviation community for the past 37 years. The volume of traffic* on the AKARA corridor has drastically increased since its establishment, which, in turn, has led to safety concerns from ICAO and the International Air Transport Association (IATA). The recent agreement between Korea, China, and Japan brings about a valuable opportunity to resolve such concerns.

* In 1983, when the corridor was first established, the daily average number of flights was 10, which increased to 580 in 2019.

- After the high-level meeting of concerned states chaired by the President of the ICAO Council in October 2018, Korea, China, and Japan formed a working group dedicated to this issue and have been engaging in intense negotiations for the normalization of the air corridor for more

than two years. As a result, the three countries were able to successfully reach an agreement for the growing aviation industry of Northeast Asia and safety of international air passengers.

- Mr. Sang-do KIM, Deputy Minister for Aviation Policy at MOLIT, said, “The shift from the outdated air corridor system created during the Cold War era to a new air route and air traffic control system will significantly improve aviation safety in the Incheon FIR area south of Jeju island, and also increase traffic capacity with a more efficient network of air routes. This will allow us to better contribute to the international air transport.”

※ Glossary of terms

· (Corridor): An area where aircraft can fly only at a certain flight level due to special circumstances in which it is difficult to set an air route.

·(Flight Information Region, FIR) A responsible airspace for navigation safety management, which includes territorial air and space over international waters, designated and approved by ICAO for air control service, flight information service, and alert service.

* Incheon Flight Information Region was approved by ICAO in 1963 and spans approximately 430,000 Km² including territorial air and space over international waters.

· (Territorial Air) Airspace where the exclusive sovereignty of a party is recognized by the Convention on International Civil Aviation.

* Vertical space over a territory and territorial waters (usually 12 NM) from the ground and water surface.
