

AVIATION'S IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

- A GLOBAL CHALLENGE NEEDS A GLOBAL SOLUTION -

Setting the scene

As with all economic activity, air transport has an impact on the environment. Specifically, it is an emitter of carbon dioxide, the primary greenhouse gas emitted through human activity. One tonne of kerosene generates 3.15 tonnes of CO₂, and as yet alternatives to kerosene are not available on a commercial scale.

Yet contrary to common perceptions, aviation's contribution to climate change is small and relatively stable, at around 2% of total man-made CO₂. This is by no means cause for complacency, however air transport is an important sector and needs to secure its ability to sustain growth into the future. Therefore, for many years now, AEA's members have been committed to a robust emissions containment policy which decouples growth from emissions and translates into the concept of "Carbon Neutral Growth 2020" (CNG 2020), as part of ambitious industry goals, and the four-pillar strategy:

- Improved technology, including the deployment of sustainable low-carbon fuels;
- More efficient aircraft operations;
- Infrastructure improvements, including modernised air traffic management systems;
- Market-based measures, to fill the remaining emissions gap.

In Europe, regulatory activity on complementary market-based measures has centred on the EU's decision to bring aviation into the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS), while simultaneous efforts to establish a market-based mechanism (MBM) at the level of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) have not yet delivered. The EU ETS covers merely part of total world aviation activity whereas the industry is growing faster in other parts of the world.

EU ETS was originally designed to apply to all flights within, into and out of the EU. However, this scope led to trade disputes at international level. Against this background, the EU facilitated progress at ICAO level to eventually achieve a global MBM by curtailing the scope to cover intra-European flights only. In parallel, in autumn 2013 ICAO States decided to develop a global MBM for international aviation, for approval in 2016 and implementation in 2020. Nevertheless, the EU ETS still has a negative impact on airlines operating on European routes.

2% World aviation's share of CO₂ emissions from all sources. ⁽¹⁾

12% EU aviation's share of world aviation CO₂ emissions, under the stop-the-clock EU ETS regime. ⁽²⁾

up to 100% A global solution through ICAO could cover up to 100% of emissions from international aviation.

What is AEA's position?

AEA is strongly in favour of such a global agreement for international aviation under the aegis of ICAO. Only a global agreement will provide genuine mitigation and will serve to avoid competitive distortions between countries, regions and operators. The international aviation industry has already prepared a great deal of useful groundwork and is committed to continuing to do so in the future.

⁽¹⁾ IPCC, 'Aviation and the Global Atmosphere. A special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 1999.

⁽²⁾ Verified emissions reported by airlines under the EU's ETS for 2012, as recorded in the Union Registry. IATA Fact Sheet: Climate Change, December 2013

A look into the future

AEA airlines support the work on the global MBM for international aviation under ICAO to be developed by 2016 and implemented from 2020. A global MBM will complement the emissions reductions resulting from investment in new technology, efficient infrastructure and operational improvements while avoiding a patchwork of different measures and possible trade disputes. We support the current approach to introduce an offsetting scheme to attain CNG 2020.

The airlines' priorities are:

- We urge decision makers to take a holistic approach when assessing the global agreement on emissions reductions from international aviation. On the one hand, the discussion about the EU ETS has stimulated the need to work on a global MBM at ICAO level. On the other hand, it has to be accepted that the EU ETS cannot serve as a blueprint for the global scheme; the views and circumstances of other parts of the world need to be taken into account.
- We urge the decision makers to implement the Single European Sky in order to bring about a more efficient Air Traffic Management in Europe. In addition to all the other unquestionable benefits for airlines, the Single European Sky could be the biggest environmental project in Europe, reducing emissions by 8.1 million tonnes of CO₂ annually.⁽³⁾
- AEA supports research, development and deployment of sustainable aviation fuels that meet environmental, societal and economic sustainability criteria. In this context, we call upon legislators to adopt common standards and specifications, including sustainability criteria, for alternative aviation fuels in collaboration with international partners; to increase the financial support to R&D and to the deployment of sustainable aviation fuels; and to set positive incentives without distortive effects within the airline industry and also with regard to sustainable fuels in other modes of transport.

(3) Eurocontrol, 'PRR 2011 Performance Review Report'.

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