

Brussels, 28 September 2007

Europe stands firm on ambitious action to cut Aviation Emissions

The 36th Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) ended on Friday without clear agreement on a way forward to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from international aviation. Europe pressed for a more ambitious outcome, but safeguarded its ability to introduce an aviation emissions trading scheme.

Speaking for Europe at the end of the talks in Montreal, Luis Fonseca de Almeida, Director General of Civil Aviation for Portugal^{1[1]}, said “*We strongly believe that it would be best if the international community could reach an effective mechanism on tackling aviation emissions. We are disappointed by the outcome and believe ICAO has abdicated the leadership role given to it in the Kyoto Protocol. That is a very great failing that should concern us all.*”

Jacques Barrot, Vice-President of European Commission and Commissioner for Transport, added: “ICAO has made an important contribution to safer and more secure air transport but its record on aircraft emissions is simply not good enough. While Europe will continue to support and participate in ICAO work on the environment, we must make more and quicker progress to tackle the urgent problem of climate change”.

Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas added: “In order to fight climate change, all sectors must contribute in a fair way, including aviation, whose emissions are increasing very rapidly. It is a great pity that ICAO has not been able to reach an agreement on the way forward. The EU has set up an ambitious and comprehensive emissions trading system and is in the process of agreeing legislation that would extend it to aviation emissions. This process must continue without delay”

At the Assembly, a majority of delegates refused to sign up to meaningful targets to reduce aviation emissions. A European compromise suggestion to set up an urgent high-level ICAO process to fix such targets and provide input to the UN negotiations on a successor to the Kyoto Protocol was watered down and will only look at “*possible aspiration goals*”.

A key point for Europe was to ensure that market-based measures such as emissions trading can be used in efforts to manage aviation’s climate impact. Although many delegates pushed for individual states to have veto-rights over other countries’ use of such schemes, there was not global consensus on this point, and by registering a formal reservation on this particular point, Europe made its view clear that it will not feel bound by this part of the conclusions.

^{1[1]} Note for editors: Portugal speaks as President of the European Union (EU) and of the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC)