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Global aviation sector commits to support sustainable development

Geneva, 22 March 2012 – Leaders of the aviation industry meeting in Geneva, today sent a reminder to governments of the vital role the sector plays in economic growth, providing jobs whilst taking its environmental responsibilities seriously. Chief Executives and Directors General from 16 global aviation companies and organisations signed the Aviation & Environment Summit's Declaration as a joint message to world governments due to meet at Rio de Janeiro for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in June.

The industry leaders, representing airports, airlines, air navigation service providers and the makers of aircraft and engines, signed the declaration in a show of unity on the issue of sustainable development. Paul Steele, Executive Director of the Air Transport Action Group (ATAG), the organisation coordinating the Summit, said that the declaration shows that aviation takes its role in sustainable development seriously. "Sustainable development – and the Rio+20 process – is about finding ways to balance the needs of growing economies and higher standards of living across society with the need to more carefully manage the resources we are using and the impact that we have on the world. I am pleased to say that aviation is committed to doing just that.

"In 2008, we were the first global sector to commit to global cross-industry action on climate change. That declaration set the agenda for cooperative action across the aviation industry to reduce fuel use and emissions. The cooperation between industry partners and the projects underway are impressive. They have led to millions of tonnes of avoided carbon emissions. Our commitment was taken up by governments and received support from the Secretary General of the United Nations as a path forward for other industries to follow. Today, we are able to expand that commitment to take account of our other impacts – the positive role we play in economic and social terms."

The declaration says: "Aviation brings enormous benefits to communities and economies around the globe. It is a key enabler of economic growth and social development and provides connectivity and access to markets and tourism. Air transport, currently supporting 56.6 million jobs and over \$2.2 trillion of global GDP with a strong track record of fuel efficiency and CO₂ emissions savings, is a strategic contributor to sustainable development."

Paul Steele added, "While aviation has shown remarkable commitment to working on its environmental responsibility, we also need governments to step up and help craft the sustainable future we all want. Support for research and development of new technologies, sustainable biofuels for aviation and the much-needed improvements in infrastructure are vital for aviation to be able to continue its positive role, while minimising its environmental impact. One key way to do this is to show leadership through the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) to deliver a global framework for international, multilateral market-based measures for aviation.

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“Aviation is committed to addressing its environmental footprint. But any effort to do that must be properly designed and well thought-through to avoid competitive distortions and the diplomatic tensions that we are now seeing because of the European Emission Trading Scheme. We will be the ones stuck in the middle of a trade war and that will help no-one. Let’s ensure that governments get around the table at ICAO and build a truly global scheme that will incentivise efficiency, be acceptable to all governments and – most importantly – actually reduce emissions.”

The declaration was signed by the heads of associations representing the world’s airports (Airports Council International), airlines (International Air Transport Association), air navigation service providers (Civil Air Navigation Service Providers Organisation) and the CEOs of Airbus, Boeing, ATR, Bombardier, CFM International, Embraer, GE Aviation, Honeywell Aerospace, Pratt & Whitney and Rolls-Royce.

The declaration came at the end of the 6th Aviation & Environment Summit, where over 300 leaders from across the aviation industry gathered in Geneva to discuss the progress being made in reducing emissions from aviation through new technology, operational efficiency and developments in infrastructure.

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