

MEDIA RELEASE

Supporting Middle East jobs, economic growth and sustainable development through aviation

Air transport: supports 2.4 million jobs and \$157.2 billion of Middle Eastern GDP

New York, 19 July 2016 – Aviation is vital to the modern, globalised world, supporting millions of jobs and driving economic growth. But the benefits of connectivity must be protected with appropriate support from governments if the air transport sector is to help fulfil its potential as a connector of people, trade and tourism and is a driver of sustainable development. These are the conclusions drawn in a new report, *Aviation: Benefits Beyond Borders*, issued by the Air Transport Action Group (ATAG).

Worldwide, aviation supports 62.7 million jobs and generates \$2.7 trillion in gross domestic product (GDP). Not only does air transport provide significant economic benefits, but it also plays a major role in the social development of people and communities all over the globe, allowing people to travel for educational opportunities and cultural exchange, more broadly. Across the Middle East, specifically, air transport supports 2.4 million jobs and contributes \$157.2 billion to the region's GDP.

In the next 20 years, forecasts suggest that aviation-supported jobs worldwide will increase to over 99 million and GDP to \$5.9 trillion. The Middle East has seen impressive expansion in its aviation industry in recent years and is forecast to be the fastest growing region in the world over the next two decades. The region continues to consolidate its position as a global hub, connecting the European and Asia-Pacific markets. However, issues with capacity remain. If the Middle East is to realise its economic potential, further investment in infrastructure, particularly air traffic management, is needed.

ATAG executive director, Michael Gill, says that the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the United Nations highlights a number of goals that the international community should strive to achieve by 2030: "We found that air transport in some way supports 14 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, from decent work and economic growth to quality education and reduced inequalities. By continuing to grow in a sustainable manner, aviation can strive to be a force for good for many years to come."

"A significant factor in our work on sustainable development is the industry's world-leading climate action plan. We need support from governments around the world to agree on a key part of that plan at the upcoming International Civil Aviation Organization Assembly, where we hope an agreement can be reached on a global offsetting scheme for air transport. It is a vital part of our industry's future role in helping to support development worldwide."

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ATAG is a coalition of organisations and companies throughout the air transport industry that drive the sustainable development of the air transport sector. Funding members include ACI, Airbus, ATR, Boeing, Bombardier, CANSO, CFM, Embraer, Honeywell Aerospace, GE, IATA, Pratt & Whitney, Rolls-Royce and Safran.

Abdul Wahab Teffaha, Secretary General of the Arab Air Carriers Organisation (AACO): “Arab governments have mostly considered air transport as an integral pillar to national sustainable economic development. However, the fast-paced growth of the sector in the region, which is projected to continue at least in the coming ten to twenty years, requires further focus on airspace infrastructure development, safety oversight and security matters in order to maintain the development of civil aviation in a safe, secure, economic and sustainable manner”.

Patti Chau, Regional Director for Airports Council International Asia-Pacific: “Like other members of the aviation industry, airports share a common vision for the sustainable development of the sector. Airports are key infrastructure, enabling transportation of passengers and cargo and facilitating economic development. Growth in connectivity is essential to a country’s and region’s prosperity and at ACI, we call on governments in Asia-Pacific and the Middle East to continue to develop aviation policy that will support the growth of air transport, whilst respecting the right balance between that growth and sustainability.”

Hanan Qabartai, Director Middle East Affairs for the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO): “Middle East is the fastest growing air traffic region but future growth and the resulting economic benefits will only be realised if States invest in air traffic management infrastructure and harmonise airspace. CANSO is asking States to organise airspace according to operational requirements rather than national borders; allow more flexible use of military airspace; and cooperate with each other across the region. CANSO’s goal is to achieve safe, harmonised, and seamless airspace to secure the region’s future. It is working hard to achieve this through joint initiatives such as the Middle East ATM Enhancement Programme (MAEP).”

The report, *Aviation: Benefits Beyond Borders*, covers the global aviation sector, with regional and some national analysis. It is available for download at www.aviationbenefits.org.

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Notes:

- The full report and case studies are available from www.aviationbenefits.org
- Media may also be interested in the newswire, capturing sustainable aviation news from across the industry at www.aviationbenefits.org/newswire
- The **Air Transport Action Group** is a coalition of organisations and companies throughout the air transport industry that drive the sustainable development of the air transport sector. Funding members include ACI, Airbus, ATR, Boeing, Bombardier, CANSO, CFM, Embraer, Honeywell Aerospace, GE, IATA, Pratt & Whitney, Rolls-Royce and Safran. www.atag.org