Joint ACI EUROPE, ATAG, EUROCONTROL press release   29 October 2004

Cross-industry cooperation required to address airport capacity crunch

From the joint ACI EUROPE, ATAG, EUROCONTROL, European Commission and IATA Airport Operations Conference, European Parliament, Brussels, 27-29 October

European Parliament, Brussels, 29 October 2004: Unlocking latent capacity is key to ensuring airports can cope with the expected growth of traffic in the short and medium-term, the closing day of the 'Airport Operations Conference' has heard. Expansion opportunities are limited for airports, and therefore extra efforts must be put into capacity enhancement exercises, including ensuring that allocated slots are used, and ensuring that air traffic management procedures, systems, and infrastructures are functioning as efficiently as possible.

"Safety is always our number one priority. However, there are actions that all of us can take to unlock some of the latent capacity currently existing in many of Europe's airports," said Víctor M. Aguado, Director General of EUROCONTROL. "One key step that the industry can take is to strengthen information sharing and collaborative decision making. From the air traffic management perspective, we know that such an approach works. This year's excellent performance with regards to en-route delays clearly shows that a 'gate to gate' approach with information shared between all parties can go a very long way to increasing capacity."

The impact of aviation on the environment also received particular attention. "It is clear that technology is insufficient to offset environmental impacts. Consultation and communication combined with operational changes will help to ensure that as an industry we can address the legitimate concerns of citizens."

Throughout the conference, speakers underlined that as the number of flights is expected to double by 2020, it is crucial for states, airports, airlines and air navigation service providers to ensure that they are implementing international safety programmes such as the ICAO Oversight Programme and the EUROCONTROL Regulation Implementation Programme. An additional initiative should be put in place with all partners to broaden current actions and to look in particular at safety across approach and landing, airport surfaces and departures.

"The need to change drives partners together, and greater partnership is clearly the key to change," Mr. Aguado added.

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Note to Editors:

Joint ACI EUROPE, ATAG, EUROCONTROL and IATA conference

Entitled 'Partnership for Change' this high-level conference – took place at the European Parliament Chamber, Brussels, Belgium, from 27-29 October 2004 – brought together all senior managers and decision makers involved in European airport airside operations to share objectives, problems and experiences - and collectively agree the best way forward.

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EUROCONTROL, the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation, has as its primary objective to develop a seamless, pan-European air traffic management (ATM) system that fully copes with the growth in air traffic, while maintaining a high level of safety, reducing costs and respecting the environment.

EUROCONTROL has 34 Member States: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

On 8 October 2002, the Member States and the European Community signed a Protocol on the Accession of the European Community to the revised EUROCONTROL Convention. Pending its entry into force after ratification by all Parties, certain provisions of the Protocol are already being provisionally applied.