

# MEDIA RELEASE

## Latin American aviation providing sustainable growth

**Rio de Janeiro, 26 July 2011** – Aviation is taking a responsible approach to environmental issues, according to the Air Transport Action Group (ATAG), which is hosting a sustainable aviation workshop in Rio de Janeiro today. ATAG Executive Director, Paul Steele, says that no other industry is doing more to reduce its emissions, “It’s very gratifying to see airlines, airports, air traffic control providers and aircraft makers all over the world putting so much effort into reducing the impact that aviation has on the environment.”

The global air transport sector last year emitted 649 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. This is two percent of the global total of man-made carbon dioxide, which is around 34 billion tonnes. “Two percent may sound small, but we think it is still too much,” says Steele, “In 2008, our industry became the only sector at the global level to develop a set of targets for reducing our emissions. From 2020, we will cap the growth in net aviation CO<sub>2</sub>, even though our passenger numbers will continue to rise. By 2050, we will reduce by 50% the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> released from aviation, compared to 2005. These are ambitious targets. But we are an ambitious industry and the discussions at today’s workshop will show that we are committed to achieving them.”

Delegates at the ATAG workshop heard from aircraft manufacturers about some of the new technologies being developed to make aircraft more environmentally-friendly. New designs, more light-weight construction materials, improvements in aerodynamics and use of winglets can reduce emissions. “In fact, through technology alone, the aviation industry has already improved the efficiency of aircraft by 70% below the first generations of jets in 1960. Each new generation of aircraft is 15% - 20% more fuel-efficient than the model it replaces.”

Steele says that the industry has a very real incentive to reduce fuel use, “Fuel is our number one cost – about 30% of the operating cost of airlines worldwide. Last year, fuel cost us \$US140 billion globally and this year it could be up to \$US180 billion. So not only do we have an environmental incentive to reduce the amount of fuel we use, but a financial one too.”

Across the world, airlines are introducing new operational measures to cut down on carbon and fuel. From introducing light weight seats and catering trolleys to using new ways of landing and taking-off, there are many projects underway by all airlines, including those in Latin America: GOL Airlines in Brazil is using a new technique to wash aircraft which uses 90% less water than previous methods. Avianca is using new techniques to fly aircraft more efficiently which saved them \$US13 million in fuel in 2009. Copa Airlines has introduced winglets across its fleet, reducing fuel use by 3.5%. Volaris of Mexico has instituted a programme to look at environmental issues across its whole business. Quito’s new airport is being built with environmental considerations and the local community as key design elements. Embraer here in Brazil is helping by producing fuel-efficient aircraft.

**more**

**AIR TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP** | Geneva, Switzerland | +41 22 770 2672 | [www.atag.org](http://www.atag.org)

ATAG is a coalition of organisations and companies throughout the air transport industry that drive air transport infrastructure improvements in an environmentally-sustainable manner. ATAG has some 60 members worldwide; its funding members include ACI, Airbus, Boeing, Bombardier, CANSO, CFM, Embraer, Honeywell Aerospace, GE, IATA, Pratt & Whitney and Rolls-Royce.

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“One of the big challenges remains infrastructure, and particularly air traffic control. In Europe and North America, flights have to circle above congested airports and fly through crowded airspace. They are being handled in a very safe way, but we can use new technology to make sure that air travel is even safer, while also being more efficient. Latin America must also take care as its aviation industry grows, to ensure that proper planning is done now, for the passengers of the future.”

A big area of discussion is the use of sustainable biofuels for aviation. “This is a very exciting development,” said Steele, “After a three years of very rigorous testing, just a few weeks ago we received approval to start using biofuels in normal passenger flights. Those flights have already started and it is great to see the industry seizing this opportunity with enthusiasm.

“Biofuels will allow us to grow while reducing our overall emissions. It is estimated that by using sustainable biofuels, we could reduce emissions by up to 80%. Technically, we know that biofuels in aviation work and there are a large number of test flights that prove that – including the important TAM Airlines test flight here in Rio de Janeiro last year. Now, it is vital to commercialise this new energy source.”

The Air Transport Action Group published a report, *Powering the Future of Flight*, which identified ‘six easy steps’ that governments and policymakers could follow to assist aviation and the biofuels sector in embracing sustainable aviation biofuels. The steps are:

- 1) Foster research into new feedstock sources and refining processes
- 2) De-risk public and private investments in aviation biofuels
- 3) Provide incentives for airlines to use biofuels from an early stage
- 4) Encourage stakeholders to commit to robust international sustainability criteria
- 5) Understand local green growth opportunities
- 6) Establish coalitions encompassing all parts of the supply chain

“Of course, these six steps are not actually a real challenge. What we set out to do is illustrate the process in a simple way. It is clear that aviation is ready to become a major customer in the sustainable biofuel market. It is vital for our future and it is an important step in reducing carbon emissions. This publication, we hope, will provide some inspiration and ideas based on work already underway.”

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**Media contact:** Haldane Dodd, Head of Communications, [doddh@atag.org](mailto:doddh@atag.org), +41 79 429 8710

Notes and further information:

- The Air Transport Action Group (ATAG) is a coalition of organisations and companies throughout the air transport industry committed to bringing about environmental and infrastructure improvements through cross-industry cooperation. It is the only organisation that represents all sectors of the aviation industry at a global level.
- ATAG has established a website resource for aviation and environment stories at [www.enviro.aero](http://www.enviro.aero)