Agenda for sustainable future in general and business aviation

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PURPOSE: to outline an agenda for a sustainable future in general and business aviation.

CONTENT: following a request to do so from stakeholders, industry and the Member States, the Commission has decided to prepare this report on general and business aviation. General and business aviation concerns 1) all civil aircraft operations other than commercial air transport; and 2) on demand, remunerated, civil air transport operations. The scope includes, *inter alia*: specialised aerial works, aerial training, recreational flying, on-demand air taxi operations, and company/individual owned aircraft operated for business/professional purposes.

Until recently, the EU had very little dealings with this aviation sector. In recent years, however, a number of developments have required the Commission to reassess this policy. This is due: to the Community's growing responsibility for aviation safety and security; the recent upgrading of the Single European Sky; the deployment of the new Air traffic Management system for Europe; the expected "capacity crunch" and concerns about aviation's impact on the environment.

Currently there are up to 50 000 motor-powered **General and Business Aviation aircraft** in Europe (including around 2 800 turbine-powered) compared to around 5 000 aircraft in the European commercial airline fleet. In addition 180 000 – 200 000 micro-light and non-motor powered aircraft are used for sport and recreation. In 2006 around 9% of all aircraft movements registered by Eurocontrol accounted for General and Business aviation. This sector of the aviation industry provides closely tailored, flexible, door-to-door transportation for individuals, enterprises and local communities. It offers increased mobility, business productivity and regional cohesion.

At the same time, however, many in the business have expressed concerns regarding the number and extent of regulations that affect them. Many SME's, as well as not-for-profit organisations, have called on the Commission to show due regard to the proportionality and subsidiarity principle. In this report, the Commission agrees to monitor application of both the proportionality and the subsidiarity principles. This monitoring will include technical mandates given by the Commission to specialised agencies, such as Eurocontrol.

A number of stakeholders, representing mainly recreational and sport aviation, have expressed concern regarding the future definition and regulation of different kinds of local flights. Thus, when revising the EASA Regulation, and when preparing the implementing Regulations, the Commission agrees to develop appropriate rules that are capable of being adapted to the complexity of the aircraft as regards both the maintenance and operation of aircraft, as well as crew licences.

On the demand side, the report notes that Europe is facing an ever growing gap between capacity and demand. If the current growth trends are maintained and capacity levels not increased the report predicts that air traffic in Europe will double in the next 20 years and over 60 European airports could be heavily congest. Europe's top 20 airports could be saturated at least 8-10 hours per day by 2025. If this predicted trend is to come true than General and Business aviation will find itself competing for access to airspace with the commercial aviation sector.

The Commission suggests a two track approach to alleviating air congestion:

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Better planning to optimize the use of existing capacity – such as the use of dedicated, reliever runways and airport/aerodrome areas, to meet the needs of General and Business aviation.
- The development and implementation of modern technologies. Automatic weather reporting systems unmanned Air Traffic Services, as well as Global Navigation Satellite Systems in Air Traffic Management procedures, which could prove useful in tapping into local and regional capacity in a cost-efficient way.

Similarly, in a bid to address the problem of airspace capacity, the Commission is implementing a number of institutional and technological reforms within the framework of the Single European Sky and the SESAR project. These initiatives are expected to bring safety, cost and efficiency benefits to all users – including General and Business Aviation. The report estimates that in 2005 approximately 15 million General and Business aviation flights took place in Europe. Less than 1 million of them were operated under the supervision of air traffic control. Those involved in General and Business Aviation as well as those using airspace without the supervision of air traffic control, have expressed particular concern regarding the proliferation of controlled airspace, future airspace classification and equipage requirements that are being defined in the Single European Sky and its SESAR programme.

From an environmental point of view, General and Business aviation, in common with the wider airline industry, imposes negative impacts on the environment in terms of noise and gaseous emissions.

To conclude the report, the Commission calls on all interested parties to pursue a dialogue on the future of this sector in Europe. For its part, the Commission will monitor future developments. It will, in particular, seek to:

- build a basic set of data regarding European General and Business aviation;
- remain vigilant vis-à-vis the correct application of the proportionality and subsidiarity principles;
- take account of airspace and infrastructure needs during capacity optimisation and planning;
- promote new technologies that allow the industry to maintain a competitive edge and to untap regional and local capacity in a cost efficient manner;
- facilitate General and Business aviation access to foreign markets;
- ensure General and Business aviation remain environmentally sustainable.