

# Developing a common aviation area with Israel

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The Committee on Transport and Tourism Luca **ROMAGNOLI** (NI, IT) on developing a Common Aviation Area with Israel in response to the Commission Communication on the subject. It recalls that Israel is the most important aviation market in the Middle East with a strong growth potential, and that it has a strategic position as a bridge between Europe and the Middle East and towards regions which are further away.

The committee welcomes the commencement of the negotiations with Israel on a comprehensive air transport agreement. It stresses the importance of the agreement in terms of creating the conditions for extending the Common Aviation Area. Members consider that the agreement:

- should not limit the level of market access already achieved in the existing bilateral agreements;
- should also be balanced in terms of market access. Furthermore market opening needs to be phased, reciprocal and sustainable;
- should provide for stringent air safety and security rules.

Members emphasise that the opening-up of markets must always follow regulatory convergence with regard to safety, security, environmental, State aid and competition law aspects, and also the employment rights of the workers and that the degree of liberalisation has to be linked to the degree to which a level playing field is achieved in these areas.

They recognise that for long and medium haul air routes, the aviation sector is the fastest way to connect countries, places and people and will continue to be the most attractive means of transport in terms of speed and cost in the future. They also recognise the important contribution of the aviation sector in creating work, both directly and indirectly, particularly linking places of the world where no other competitive means of transport is now available. Nonetheless they encourage the use and development of inter-modality and other means of transport.

The aviation sector has certain negative environmental effects, in particular as a source of noise and as a significant contributor to pollutant emissions. Members therefore consider it essential that the agreement allows for the possibility to take action within the EU with respect to environmental issues in order to mitigate the impact of aviation on water, air quality and noise levels.

With regard to the negotiations themselves, Members stressed that these should be carried out in close cooperation with the Member States, given that they have the necessary expertise and experience to assist with such negotiations. The Commission is called upon to ensure that the Parliament and all relevant stakeholders are fully informed and consulted throughout the negotiations.