Agenda for sustainable future in general and business aviation

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The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the own initiative report by Luís **QUEIRO**(EPP-ED, PT) on an Agenda for Sustainable Future in General and Business Aviation, broadly welcoming the Commission Communication on this issue. MEPs believe that the Commission Communication provides a sound analysis of the issues affecting the sector and identifies a number of suitable approaches for addressing the specific needs of this sector within a framework of permanent dialogue between all the stakeholders.

The main recommendations contained in the report are as follows:

Proportionate regulation and subsidiarity: MEPs call on the Commission to ensure the application of the proportionality and subsidiarity principles in the design and implementation of both existing and future aviation legislation.

The Commission is invited to:

- carry out, on a systematic basis, segmented impact assessments to provide for differentiation of regulations affecting different categories of undertakings and airspace users, if necessary, and in so far as this does not compromise safety;
- ensure that they are proportionate and commensurate to the complexity of the respective category of aircraft and operation;
- examine the possibility of laying down simplified security procedures and screening processes for business aviation passengers and to facilitate the exchange of best practice on security measures at small to medium-sized airports;
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As regards general aviation, MEPs consider that a degree of flexibility at the implementation stage would be desirable as far as general aviation is concerned; this could be achieved by delegating certain supervisory powers to sports and recreational aviation associations and organisations subject to appropriate oversight by the relevant aviation authority and provided that there is no conflict of interests.

Airport and airspace capacity: MEPs point out that it is becoming increasingly difficult for General and Business Aviation to get access not only to major airports but also to regional airports. In this respect, they urge the Commission and Member States to tackle these problems by implementing measures to optimise the use of existing capacity by better planning and through the deployment of modern technologies.

The committee believes that helicopters can be an important short-haul connecting tool between airports and urges the Commission and Member States to include them in capacity-enhancing strategies. It also urges Member States and regional and local authorities to invest in the modernisation and establishment of small and medium-sized airports and to involve all interested parties in consultation processes with a view to dedicating, where appropriate, potential or existing airports for use specifically by General and Business Aviation.

MEPs consider it vitally important that airspace zoning around small and medium-sized airports be appropriate for General and Business Aviation users. They also underline that business aviation should be given, where possible, adequate access to major airports in order to enable it to connect Europe's regions

to its economic centres and request the Commission to examine and prepare a report to Parliament by the end of 2009 on whether there is a need to adapt relevant provisions of the existing Slot Allocation Regulation.

MEPs stress the need to develop, at European level, a harmonised approach for guaranteeing consistency between airport slots and flight plans and call on the Commission to propose appropriate measures. They expect that the introduction of a system of Air Traffic Management with state-of-the-art and innovative technologies within the framework of the SESAR Joint Undertaking would contribute to fighting fragmentation of European airspace and its forecasted congestion and would significantly increase airspace capacity. However, they stress that the SESAR programme must fully take into account the specificities of General and Business Aviation and deliver real benefits to the sector without placing unnecessary burdens on it.

The report stresses that Visual Flight Rules (VFR) users should have access to traffic, meteorological and aeronautical information in a user-friendly and cost-effective way and insists that the "Single European Sky" legislation and SESAR should not lead to disproportionate and excessively costly technological requirements for small aircraft operated under VFR.

Environmental sustainability: MEPs consider that General and Business Aviation has a reduced environmental impact in terms of CO2 emissions and noise, when compared with that of commercial air transport. However, they believe it is necessary to reduce emissions through further enhancing the environmental performance of smaller aircraft by using cleaner fuels and by promoting research, technological development and innovation.

Moreover, the committee notes that the majority of General and Business Aviation falls outside the scope of the Commission proposal to extend the Emission Trading Scheme to aviation. It is also of the view that noise issues should be dealt with at national and local levels in accordance with the subsidiarity principle.

Other issues: MEPs believe that policy-makers must have at their disposal adequate data and statistical information on General and Business Aviation in order to fully understand the sector and thus be able to regulate it properly. In this respect, they call on the Commission and Eurostat to develop and implement a systematic approach to the gathering and sharing of international and European data.

The report also calls on the Commission to take appropriate measures to facilitate access of the EU's General and Business Aviation manufacturing industry to world markets and considers it necessary that the interests of general and business aviation are taken into account in the development of the EU’s external aviation policy.

Lastly, MEPs consider as essential the promotion of recreational and sport aviation, as well as of European aeroclubs, and call on the Commission to take account of the important role that this aviation sector plays and can continue to play in the development of vocational training for pilots.

MEPs request Commission to report back to the European Parliament by the end of 2009 on progress achieved in relation to these issues.