Agenda for sustainable future in general and business aviation

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The European Parliament adopted, by 524 to 74 with 6 abstentions, a resolution welcoming the Commission Communication on an Agenda for Sustainable Future in General and Business Aviation since it 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 resolution underlines that general and business aviation is the fastest growing segment of civil aviation in Europe. It complements regular air transport performed by commercial airlines and thus provides specific social and economic benefits such as increasing the mobility of citizens, the productivity of businesses and regional cohesion. However, EU aviation policy has traditionally focussed on commercial air transport, while not giving due consideration to its growing impact on general and business aviation.

The resolution underlines the main areas to be reviewed in-depth:

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 ensure that they are proportionate and commensurate to the complexity of the respective category of aircraft and operation. It is also invited to: i) 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; ii) facilitate the exchange of best practice on security measures at small to medium-sized airports.

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. MEPs also request that helicopters be included in the capacity-enhancing strategies. 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.

Air traffic management system: the resolution calls for the development, at European level, of a harmonised approach for guaranteeing consistency between airport slots and flight plans and call on the Commission to propose appropriate measures. MEPs 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. They believe that it should be one of the objectives to provide Visual Flight Rules (VFR) users with access to traffic, meteorological and aeronautical information in a user-friendly and cost-effective way. MEPs insists that the "Single European Sky" legislation and SESAR do not lead to disproportionate and excessively costly technological

requirements for small aircraft operated under VFR, while fully recognising that all aircraft using controlled airspace must feature equipment providing for an adequate level of safety, such as positioning devices.

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.

Parliament 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. The Commission is called upon to reinforce support for aeronautical research, development and innovation, in particular by SMEs that develop and build aircraft for general and business aviation. 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.