Air transport: creation of the Single European Sky

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The committee adopted a report by Robert ATKINS (EPP/ED, UK) on the Commission communication on the creation of a "single European sky", in which it urged EU transport ministers to take immediate action to solve the problem of congestion and delays. The rapporteur said that the problem would only get worse and that political leadership was required now. His report urged the Council to take the political decision that the Commission should create a single sky above the single market so as to ensure optimum use of European airspace. It said that, so far, Eurocontrol (the pan-European agency responsible for managing the airspace over EU and non-EU States) had failed to cope with the exponential increase in aircraft movements resulting from cheaper travel, more airlines and more passengers. It should be recast as a purely regulatory and technical authority. Urgent consideration should be given to renewing and renovating the technical infrastructure to support improvements in air traffic management (ATM) methodology. Transport ministers were also urged to commit themselves to an urgent review of the delineation, protection and use of military airspace and to demand the adoption of civil air transport practices by military air carriers. Finally, there was a call for an effective emergency action plan, to be implemented during an international crisis. The delays exacerbated by events such as the Balkan conflict must be reduced in any future emergency. The committee called for all these proposals to be implemented as soon as possible.