Relations with the Russian Federation and China in the field of air transport

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Roberts ZILE on relations with the Russian Federation and China in the field of air transport. While acknowledging the desirability of comprehensive aviation agreements with both countries, MEPs expressed regret that Parliament had not had access to the terms of the negotiating mandates which the Commission was now seeking from the Council. They therefore called for Parliament to be "better integrated" in the process of negotiating these agreements.

As far as China was concerned, the report called on the Council to extend the Commission's negotiating mandate to cover theprovision of the necessary infrastructure in Chinese airports and air traffic control over Chinese airspace, saying that both were inadequate at present and posed anobstacle to the development of aviation relations. The committee also insisted that the provisions of a balanced conclusion to negotiations with China on air cargo should be implemented without delay and if necessary before completion of negotiations on passenger traffic.

As far as Russia was concerned, MEPs said that "the acceptance of Community clauses should be a starting point for Community negotiations". They noted that the charges imposed by Russia for flights over its territory were "in violationof international law", and underlined that these charges had not been used for the promisedimprovement of air traffic control management but rather to subsidise Russia's own airline in breach of competition law. The report therefore insisted that no agreement should be concluded without "the immediate and complete abolition of Russian overflight charges", and insisted that no modified charging scheme should be agreed to replace the current overflight charging regime. It also called on the Commission not to conclude an agreement on the Russian Federation 's accession to the World Trade Organisation while Russia continues to charge forSiberian overflights.

Lastly, MEPs stressed that no mandate should be granted which does not inexorably link increased access to both China's and Russia's markets to the creation of a "level playing field" through the convergence of operating standards in the areas of air traffic control and management, staff training and operating standards and aviation security and safety, as well as through convergence of regulations on competition.