

AVIATION IS TAKING POSITIVE ACTION TO REDUCE ITS IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The aviation industry is working hard to reduce emissions and its impact on the environment and any future legislation must take into account the overall effects of aviation on climate change and the industry's vital importance to world trade. That was the clear message to members of The International Air Cargo Association (TIACA) at their annual Executive Conference in Copenhagen.

Speaking in a special session on the environment, John Meenan, Executive Vice President & COO of the Air Transport Association of America (ATA) said airlines have already made significant progress in addressing climate change and are continuing to do so. Aviation, he said, contributes some 2% of man-made CO₂ worldwide with an estimated climate change impact of 3.5%. With demand for aviation growing, estimates suggest this will increase to 3% and 5% respectively by 2050.

Airlines, he added, were driven to be fuel efficient. Continued increases in the cost of oil means fuel has become the number one cost for most airlines. Consequently, airlines have every incentive to operate more efficiently. US airlines have improved fuel efficiency 110% since 1978 and achieved an overall 4% reduction in fuel consumption and emissions between 2000 and 2006 even with an increase in passenger and cargo volumes. ATA airlines, he confirmed, have committed to an additional 30% fuel efficiency improvement before 2025.

In addition to greater fuel efficiency, modern aircraft and advances in airframe and engine technology are also producing positive results. Any climate change regulatory policy must take into account the negative impact it may have on airlines' ability to invest in such improvements, John Meenan stated.

The 200 delegates attending the TIACA conference heard the ATA call for 'proportionate policies' that recognise that aviation drives 8% of the global economy yet accounts for less than 3% of greenhouse gas emissions.

Professor Peter Morrell from the UK's Cranfield University – author of a research paper commissioned by TIACA on the impact of air cargo on the environment – said operational improvements and the replacement of older aircraft types offer the potential for future reductions in fuel burn and CO₂ emissions. He estimates that air cargo's contribution to global CO₂ emissions is between 0.3%-0.6% depending on fuel allocation to cargo on passenger flights. Around 50% of air cargo is carried on passenger flights but takes up only 20% of the total payload of those flights.

Dr Peder Jensen of the European Environment Agency said that the aim must be to create a 'level playing field' where the 'polluter pays' principle is applied for environmental taxes using transparent calculation methods. This will result in predictability of cost for users. Talking about the European Parliament's proposal to bring aviation activities within the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), he said the EU generally favours international agreements but a lack of progress means the EU may have to 'go it alone'.

Delegates were given a detailed insight into EU law related to ETS by Michael Renouf, a partner in the law firm Berwin Leighton Paisner. The proposal must be adopted by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament and although the timescale for this is uncertain, it could still happen in 2008. Member States must then bring it into national law within one year, a move that could see aviation activities covered from 2011 or 2012.

Airlines, he recommended, should now be actively considering how ETS will affect their business.

'Going Green' was one of four keynote topics addressed at the TIACA Executive Conference. Other subjects looked at whether air, sea and land services are competitors or collaborators; how air express carriers are competing to develop their presence in China; and a security update by Douglas Brittin of the US Department of Homeland Security.

Speaking on the subject of TSA Air Cargo Security, Douglas Brittin addressed the key issues of domestic air cargo security in the United States – including the certified cargo screening program – and US inbound air cargo security. He also explained how TSA is working collaboratively with other countries to coordinate programs globally.

At a special Hall of Fame Gala Dinner on the first evening of the conference, the TIACA delegates were graced by the presence of His Royal Highness Prince Joachim of Denmark, who attended the awards presentation to the 2008 TIACA Hall of Fame inductees; Delford M. Smith, Chairman of Evergreen International Aviation and Klaus-Michael Kuehne, Chairman of Kuehne & Nagel International.

Jack Boisen, Chairman of TIACA, said: "We especially wish to recognize and thank our main sponsors -Copenhagen Airports and SAS Cargo - for making our 2008 Executive Conference such a fine and interesting event. We had an informative and lively conference and, as we expected, it was the environment that generated the most views and concerns."

To help address two of the world's most pressing environmental challenges -- habitat loss and climate change -TIACA partnered with The Conservation Fund to offset the carbon dioxide emissions that resulted from air travel to and from its Executive Conference and Annual General Meeting for each member attending.

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