



ASSEMBLY — 37TH SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 17: Environmental protection

STATEMENT REGARDING MITIGATION OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS FROM AIR PASSENGER TRANSPORT

(Presented by the World Tourism Organization, UNWTO)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNWTO continues to build on strategy and implementation action presented at the previous Session of the Assembly for tourism both to adapt to climate change and to mitigate Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions while reinforcing the contribution of the sector to socio-economic development. In this context UNWTO has developed a mitigation position Statement on air passenger transport, which is the dominant contributor to GHG emissions generated by visitors. This Statement, presented in this paper, will also be promulgated in the tourism community and in other fora including the next meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Cancún, Mexico in December (COP/16).

Action: The Assembly is invited to take into account the Statement in paragraph 2 in developing a policy framework on aviation and climate change.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Objective C, <i>Environmental protection – minimize the adverse effect of global civil aviation on the environment.</i>
<i>Financial implications:</i>	No additional resources required.
<i>References:</i>	A36-WP/75 (http://www.icao.int/icao/en/assembl/a36/wp/wp075_en.pdf)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Air passenger transport is closely associated with tourism, which generates a higher contribution of Gross Domestic Product, jobs and investment than most other economic activities; this is particularly the case in developing countries, where tourism is the principal service sector activity. At the same time, air passenger transport is the dominant, and a growing, contributor to global Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) generated by visitorsⁱ.

1.2 The *Davos Declaration*, adopted in October 2007 by the second global *Conference on Climate Change and Tourism*ⁱⁱ, specifies that the tourism sector must rapidly respond to climate change, within the evolving UN framework, and progressively reduce its Greenhouse Gas (GHG) contribution if it is to grow in sustainable manner; this will require action by the sector *inter alia* to “mitigate its GHG emissions, derived especially from transport and accommodation activities”.

1.3 The Davos Declaration calls for a range of actions, including for governments and international organizations to “collaborate in international strategies in the transport (in cooperation with the International Civil Aviation Organization and other aviation organizations), accommodation and

related tourism activities”. Through the “Davos Process”, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is pursuing wide-ranging programmes on both adaptation and mitigation regarding climate change and tourism.

1.4 Consistent with its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, and to poverty alleviation in particular, UNWTO believes that differing treatment, including some exemptions, transitional arrangements and incentives for one or more groups of developing countries, will be fundamental to any long-term multilateral framework for mitigation of GHG emissionsⁱⁱⁱ.

1.5 Mitigation of GHG emissions from air passenger transport^{iv} is critical to the sustainable development of tourism. International air transport has been singled out for separate mitigation treatment, through ICAO, under the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC); nevertheless mechanisms, goals and targets need to be a feature of a coherent global approach.

1.6 ICAO has carried out extensive work through its Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP) leading to tighter standards on aircraft emissions and related operating procedures. But technological, operational and infrastructure enhancements, even when the promising developments in second generation biofuels and other sustainable additional or alternative fuels^v are taken into account, will be well short on their own for the foreseeable future of countering the anticipated growth of air traffic. Thus concrete additional measures including economic instruments, preferably globally-agreed, will also be necessary; such instruments as taxes, emissions trading and carbon offset have scope implications well beyond air transport and well beyond individual countries or groups of countries.

1.7 UNWTO has paid close attention to work in ICAO, UNFCCC and elsewhere on mitigation of GHG emissions from air transport and has provided input when feasible. UNWTO has decided to prepare a specific position on air passenger transport because of the distinct treatment of air transport under the UNFCCC as well as the critical role of aviation in tourism, especially in developing countries. In preparing this position, UNWTO has undertaken specific analyses, with the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Meteorological Organization, the World Economic Forum and independently^{vi}.

1.8 Domestic air transport and both domestic and international destination tourism are encompassed in national inventories and associated with national emissions targets where relevant under the UNFCCC framework. International air transport emissions are currently the mandate of ICAO. UNWTO is currently working with various public and private sector bodies^{vii} towards the establishment of global targets for the tourism sector, which will reflect UNFCCC and ICAO targets and modalities as they are forthcoming.

2. STATEMENT

2.1 UNWTO asserts that the following principles should be incorporated into ongoing work on mitigation of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from air passenger transport:

- 1) Assessment of mitigation measures in the context of broad-spectrum tourism, including domestic, inbound and outbound flows, rather than for air transport in isolation, considering social and economic costs and benefits in cohesion with the climate change mitigation impact.
- 2) Application of the UNFCCC principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) amongst countries.
- 3) Classification of differentiation to alleviate negative impacts on tourism destination markets in developing and particularly least developed and island

countries, through differentiated targets, financial transfer mechanisms, and/or reductions in emissions levies or requirements for emissions permits, preferably applied in a framework of traffic flow origin and destination rather than solely according to country.

- 4) Effective performance monitoring, unambiguous and appropriate indicators and targets, transparent and public reporting and auditing processes, at national and global levels.
- 5) Treatment of air passenger transport operations analogously with alternative passenger transport modes where available (for example at short-haul) taking into account such factors as respective taxation and subsidy regimes (including government contributions to infrastructure) and enabling such travel choice criteria as price, comfort, convenience and trip duration to be assessed along with GHG emissions and on a non-discriminatory basis amongst modes.
- 6) Open access for air transport to carbon markets, whether national, regional or global.
- 7) Non-duplication of emissions levies on transport and other tourism-related activities (for example as a result of application by more than one authority or through different regimes such as taxation and emissions trading).
- 8) Earmarking of all revenues from levies and trading of emissions permits to GHG mitigation activities yielding measurable, reportable and verifiable mitigation results, including projects in transport and other tourism-related activities, and financial and other incentives for the earliest possible global introduction of sustainable additional or alternative fuels for air transport.
- 9) Acknowledgement of the pivotal role of the private sector and of the efforts and collective commitments by airports, air navigation service providers, air carriers and manufacturers for increased fuel efficiency, setting aspirational targets and working towards “carbon neutral growth” and subsequently substantial absolute reductions in emissions.
- 10) Continued recognition of a key role for ICAO in the fields of airframe and engine technology, air traffic management and operational approaches leading to tighter standards on aircraft emissions and improved operating procedures, and promotion of early certification and acceleration into usage of sustainable additional or alternative fuels for air transport.
- 11) Address of reduction targets and economic instruments for aviation emissions in co-operation with all parties representing directly affected sectors including tourism in particular, and development of any global GHG emissions mitigation framework or globally accepted approach specific to aviation in partnership by all related intergovernmental parties including UNWTO and in close consultation with relevant NGOs and with input from both the public and the private sectors.

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Definitions for “tourism” and “visitors” are from the publication: United Nations and World Tourism Organization. *International Recommendations of Tourism Statistics 2008* (New York, Madrid, 2008, http://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradeserv/tourism/0840120%20IRTS%202008_WEB_final%20version%2022%20February%202010.pdf): Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors. Tourism refers to the activity of visitors (see paragraphs. 1.1 and 2.9 of the publication above). A visitor is a traveler taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited. A visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor) if his/her trip includes an overnight stay, or as a same-day visitor (or excursionist) otherwise (see paragraphs 2.4 through 2.13 of the publication above).

ⁱⁱ Convened by the World Tourism Organization jointly with the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization, with the support of the World Economic Forum and the Swiss Government. The basic reference document, developed by a group of experts on climate change and tourism, was subsequently published by UNWTO-UNEP-WMO as *Climate Change and Tourism: Responding to Global Challenges* (June 2008, <http://www.unwto.org/sdt/news/en/pdf/climate2008.pdf>).

ⁱⁱⁱ In the case of international air transport, in the absence of specific provisions countries could be directly affected even if they are themselves exempted. For example, a universal emissions tax, charge or permit requirement imposed by an industrialized (Kyoto Annex I) country or according to some other *de minimis* (for example large aviation market) country criteria would have an impact not only on national carriers but on air carriers of other countries serving the country concerned and on all tourism destination markets from that country irrespective of their vulnerability. There should preferably be reductions to (or exemptions from) such levies and requirements for routes to developing countries, and notably for least developed and island States.

^{iv} In focusing on *passenger* transport, UNWTO is responding to its mandate with regard to tourism and is not addressing air cargo (freight and mail) directly (and has not yet fully incorporated passenger baggage in its evaluations). However, emissions mitigation control mechanisms for aviation may ultimately not distinguish between passenger and cargo operations because of their interlinkage. A large majority of air carriers transporting passengers include the carriage of freight on the same flight, in the bellyhold of passenger aircraft and in some cases on the main deck of combination aircraft. For certain markets, particularly involving island and landlocked developing countries, a significant proportion of this freight may be directly or indirectly associated with tourism activity (for example commodities for use or consumption at a tourism destination) but in general it is not. At the same time, depending on an individual air carrier’s business planning approach, bellyhold freight may be carried on a marginal cost basis, and thus be dependent on passenger demand. Thus it is very difficult to separate mitigation action between air freight and air passenger transport where both are carried on the same aircraft. However, consistent with its position that air transport operations should be treated analogously with other modes of transport, UNWTO does feel that air freight and air passenger operations should be treated equally, for example as regards the imposition of duties or taxes.

^v Sustainable fuels offer net GHG reductions over their life-cycle, do not compete with fresh water requirements or food production, and do not cause deforestation or other environmental impacts such as biodiversity loss.

^{vi} See, for example, a Discussion Paper on *Tourism, Air Transport and Climate Change* issued in September 2007 and a Discussion Paper on *Climate Change Mitigation Measures for International Air Transport* issued in May 2009 and updated in August that year. These Discussion Papers and more general documents on climate change and tourism may be accessed under “Background Papers” at <http://www.unwto.org/climate/support/en/support.php>.

^{vii} In this context, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has set out a vision for tackling GHG emissions, including a commitment, encompassing both domestic and international aviation and endorsed by more than 40 of the world’s largest travel and tourism companies, to cut by half carbon emission levels of 2005 by 2035. There is also an interim target of achieving a 30 per cent reduction by 2020 in the presence of an international agreement or 25 per cent reduction in the absence of such an agreement. WTTC (2009) *Leading the challenge on climate change* (http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Initiatives/Environment_Initiative/). UNWTO continues to work with WTTC, as well as with the World Economic Forum on its “Carbon Neutral Skies” initiative.