



INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION

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ASSEMBLY – 35TH SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 15: Environmental protection

LIMITATION OF THE NOISE AROUND AIRPORTS: A CONDITION FOR THE FUTURE OF AVIATION

(Presented by 41 Contracting States², Members of the European Civil Aviation Conference)

SUMMARY

This working paper calls attention to the noise situation around airports situated in densely populated areas. The legitimate complaints from populations could have serious consequences on the air transport system by bringing limitations to the development of certain airports and therefore limiting the capacity of the entire system.

Action by the Assembly: The Assembly is invited to take the actions proposed in paragraph 13.

BACKGROUND

1. Despite the progress made in technology (which has resulted in considerable reduction in noise at source) and in policies (such as the phase-out of Chapter 2 aircraft), update of studies by the ICAO Council's Committee for Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP)³ in 2004 has shown that the number of people exposed to aircraft noise will increase again if measures are not taken.

¹ English and French versions provided by ECAC.

² Albania, Armenia, Austria*, Azerbaijan, Belgium*, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus*, Czech Republic*, Denmark*, Estonia*, Finland*, France*, Germany*, Greece*, Hungary*, Iceland, Ireland*, Italy*, Latvia*, Lithuania*, Luxembourg*, Malta*, Moldova, Monaco, Netherlands*, Norway, Poland*, Portugal*, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia*, Slovenia*, Spain*, Sweden*, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom*.

* Member States of the European Union are indicated with an asterisk in the above list.

³ CAEP/6-WP/57, Appendix 3I

2. ICAO produced an additional concept, namely the Balanced Approach. It provides States with an instrument to address aircraft noise problems when they occur — at individual airports — in “*an environmentally responsive and economically responsible way. The Balanced Approach encompasses four principal elements: reduction of noise at the source, land-use planning and management, noise abatement operational procedures, and operating restrictions on aircraft*”.¹

3. The noise situation around airports in high-density areas is becoming more and more acute, predominantly in Europe but in other parts of the world as well. The particular concern of the people is the number of noisy events and sleep disturbance at night.

4. The effect of a ruling in 2003 by the European Court of Human Rights is that, States subject to its jurisdiction are legally obliged to strike and maintain a fair balance between the rights and interests of the aviation sector and the rights and interests of those adversely affected by the noise impact of its activities. While the ruling accepts that in doing this the economic interests of the sector can legitimately be taken into account, it makes equally clear that States cannot simply regard this as the only or the overriding consideration.

5. The importance of noise problems around airports is recognised by CAEP, which proposed, at its sixth meeting in February 2004, three general environmental goals for ICAO, one of which is “*to limit or reduce the number of people affected by significant aircraft noise.*”

6. Other UN bodies also address the issue of aircraft noise. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has set “*guideline values for annoyance at 50 to 55 dBLAeq, representing daytime levels below which a majority of the adult population will be protected from becoming moderately or seriously annoyed, respectively*”.²

7. Taking into account the developments and the legitimate complaints of people living around airports, it follows that aircraft noise emissions can and will have serious consequences in the near future on the growth of aviation. They may limit the development of certain airports or even bring constraints to their use, and therefore limit the capacity of the entire system. Unfortunately, it might not be possible to respond adequately to complaints of people, without putting some burden on the aviation sector.

POLICY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FUTURE

8. CAEP has traditionally proposed various measures to reduce the problem of aircraft noise, at different levels, namely technological (certification standards) and operational (procedures, restrictions).

9. At its last meeting, CAEP endorsed the newly-developed “Guidance on the Balanced Approach for aircraft noise management” for managing specific noise problems around airports by considering equally four different types of measures, as described in paragraph 2.

10. The growth of the air transport industry is outstripping the benefits offered so far by improved aircraft technology and operating practices. Therefore, all four elements of the Balanced Approach need to be tackled and measures need to be developed. Only a combination of measures represents a chance to achieve the Council’s proposed “noise objective” for ICAO.

¹ CAEP/6 – WP16: Guidance on the Balanced approach to aircraft noise management.

² WHO Guidelines for community noise, 1999.

11. There is a need for ICAO to monitor the progress made in all the elements of the Balanced Approach and to look at the results achieved with land-use planning, the reduction of noise at source, the existing restrictions and operating procedures. These elements are included within the CAEP/7 work programme.

12. With respect to reduction at source, it is traditionally an ICAO task to regularly update the noise standards in such a way that the newest technology will be applied.

ACTION BY THE ASSEMBLY

13. The Assembly is invited to consider these facts and policy conclusions with a view to:

- a) adopting the environmental goals proposed by the Council, welcoming the work done by the Council in developing the BA Guidance material, and requesting the Council to promote the use of this Guidance material,
- b) encouraging States to consider all four elements in the Balanced Approach to tackle noise problems around airports in accordance with the BA guidance material,
- c) requesting the Council, through CAEP, to develop further measures to reduce the aircraft noise at source,
- d) requesting the Council to monitor the progress made in limiting or reducing the number of people affected by noise around airports and, based on the results of this process, for CAEP/7 to consider whether work on new noise standards should be undertaken.

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