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ICAO NEWS RELEASE

COM 19/12

AVIATION GROUPS UNITE TO ACHIEVE INSTANTANEOUS GLOBAL SYSTEM UPGRADE

MONTREAL, 15 November 2012 – Culminating years of advance planning and worldwide coordination, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has successfully overseen the global real-time transition to a new aircraft flight plan, helping to usher in a new era in international air traffic management.

Working in close conjunction with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO), all 191 ICAO Member States began using the new flight plan as of 00:01 UTC earlier today.

The transition to the new plan was the equivalent of a simultaneous system software upgrade for the entire global air transport network, necessary due to its highly integrated and cooperative international characteristics. The flight plan upgrade will help aviation to more efficiently manage growing air traffic volumes and related capacity challenges while reducing its CO₂ emissions.

“The new flight plan format ICAO has introduced is necessary to maximize the capabilities of today’s modern, high performance aircraft,” stressed ICAO Secretary General, Raymond Benjamin. “ICAO’s Member States have been preparing diligently for this transition to ensure it was achieved without any impacts on the ATM system. The new flight plan will now permit flight crews and air traffic controllers to optimize routes and shorten flight times, as well as minimize noise and emissions during departures and approaches.”

To help monitor and manage the transition to the new flight plan format, ICAO, IATA and CANSO established a special coordination centre at ICAO Headquarters in Montréal beginning on 12 November. Tactical responsibilities relating to the new flight plan transition resided with the air navigation service providers who manage the world’s over 80,000 daily flights.

“Our goal in this initiative was to avoid any disruptions to international scheduled traffic,” commented ICAO Air Navigation Bureau Director, Nancy Graham. “Thanks to the contributions of our Member States, in addition to the important coordination and cooperation with IATA and CANSO, airlines and air traffic controllers now have the more detailed information they need to realize advanced operational benefits.”

A specialized agency of the United Nations, ICAO was created in 1944 to promote the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation throughout the world. It sets standards and regulations necessary for aviation safety, security, efficiency and regularity, as well as for aviation environmental protection. The Organization serves as the forum for cooperation in all fields of civil aviation among its 191 Member States.