

MEET Conference - Session 2: International Air Transport

Speech – International Air Transport – Charting a Course for a Sustainable Future

Word Count: Approx 500

1. Excellency, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, - may I begin by thanking you Chairman, for the opportunity to speak, and also to thank our host Minister Kaneko, of the Department for Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism for bringing us together to discuss these hugely important issues.

2. As we heard from the ICAO President, Mr Kobeh Gonzalez, international aviation has brought huge benefits, and still has much more to offer.

3. The challenge is to continue to broaden access to those benefits, whilst minimising aviation's impact on the environment.
4. As we heard this morning in the speech by Mr De Boer, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, transport must rise to the challenge of climate change.
5. We are all aware of the immensity of that challenge.
6. Aviation may cause a small proportion of global emissions, but it is already larger than most individual countries' emissions and is growing rapidly, and equally importantly, it is set to continue

to grow, despite the world's present economic troubles.

7. Public concern about climate change is being targeted disproportionately at aviation, leading to calls to restrict, ration or even ban flights. These calls are not just at the extremes, they are increasingly heard in the mainstream of politics.

8. This has placed real pressure on airport expansion in Europe. The UK Government will be making an announcement soon on the expansion of Heathrow, our main international hub. We are feeling that political pressure first hand.

9. The European Union's response to the general pressure and public concern is the proposal to implement emissions trading for aviation. It will prevent further emissions growth, whilst allowing the industry to grow. The UK strongly supports this initiative.

However, we agree with those who say that an EU scheme is merely a first step. A global industry needs a global scheme, but we need more than a mechanism.

10. In the EU we have an emissions goal and the emissions trading scheme will help achieve that. Unfortunately, global aviation lacks that goal.

11. So far, the International Civil Aviation Organisation has agreed only to look at fuel efficiency. Meanwhile, the UNFCCC has ambitions to halve total global emissions by 2050.

12. In our view, with the greatest respect, there is a very stark disconnect between those two positions, and that situation is unsustainable.

13. The international aviation community has to show it is taking the issue seriously. We must make a meaningful contribution and match the scale of the challenge.

14. ICAO equally has begun to recognise just what is required. The Group on International Aviation and Climate Change would have been inconceivable only two years ago. I recognise President Kobeh Gonzalez's strong personal role in this regard. I also want to pay similar tribute, to IMO Secretary General, Admiral Mitropoulos and his secretariat for the leadership they have shown in regards to shipping emissions.

15. ICAO also has to demonstrate similar leadership if it is to bridge the gap between aviation and the broader climate debate.

16. A first step would be to agree not just goals for fuel efficiency, but measures to deliver improvements. ICAO has a strong history of agreeing international standards now is the time for it to develop and agree standards for carbon dioxide emissions. The UK is committed to taking this proposal forward within ICAO, just as we are committed to supporting the IMO leadership.

17. Mr De Boer said Copenhagen needs to be a success. We fully support him, and this week's conference presents us with the perfect opportunity to continue our constructive dialogue towards an outcome in Copenhagen, that tackles climate change in a measured,

proportionate and cost-effective manner.

18. In conclusion, Minister Kaneko, your opening remarks offered us the vision of “low carbon transport for the future”. That is a vision, we all need to realise.

19. Thank you for the opportunity to make those brief remarks and for listening.