

U.S. Statement on Aviation: The Challenges and Opportunities of Aviation and Climate Change

In its first century, aviation succeeded because it constantly met the challenge of innovation — flying faster, cleaner, quieter and safer. In doing so, aviation has transformed the world. Aviation has a long record of improving efficiency but more can and should be done.

For example, in the United States, aviation has outpaced energy efficiency gains of all other modes of transport since 1985. Further, when you compare today to 2000, U.S. commercial aviation is operating 20 percent more revenue passenger miles while burning three percent less fuel. U.S. airlines have burned less fuel annually since 2000, reducing carbon output by 77 million tons... the equivalent of taking two million cars off the road every year.

However, the issue before us, at this Ministerial, is not past performance, but what we are doing for the future.

The United States has initiated measures to address aviation's contribution to climate change as well as other environmental challenges. It has already yielded benefits, and we are committed to working with our international partners in a collaborative fashion.

We are improving our scientific understanding of the impacts of aviation emissions. We must ensure that we identify the harmful emissions, accurately measure their impact and design appropriate technologies or procedures to mitigate or eliminate their effects.

We are accelerating air traffic management improvements and efficiencies to reduce fuel burn and, therefore, greenhouse gas emissions. We have already saved 300 million gallons (nearly 3 million tons of carbon emissions) by reducing vertical separation at higher altitudes where aircraft fly more efficiently. In tests of new procedures at one of our largest hubs, one U.S. carrier reduced carbon emissions by levels equivalent to removing 15,000

cars from the road for a year. These include reduced vertical separation at altitude and continuous descent approach. Also, we have undertaken initiatives with European and Asia-Pacific partners to demonstrate environmental benefits from enhanced air traffic procedures on flights across the Atlantic and Pacific. The early flights have shown promise, and we hope to build broader cooperation.

We are trying to speed up the development of promising environmental improvements in aircraft technology. Most improvements in environmental performance over the last three decades have come from enhancements in engine and airframe design. For example, individual technologies, some retrofittable to current aircraft, could get us as much as 7 to 10 percent reductions in fuel burn.

Finally, we are exploring the potential of alternative fuels for aviation — fuels that could have benefits for energy security as well as emissions performance. The United States launched the Commercial Aviation Alternative Fuels Initiative, or CAAFI, in partnership with airlines, manufacturers, airports, fuel producers, and international partners in 2006. We are implementing a road-map toward the use of alternative fuels—including commercially viable, environmentally friendly bio-fuels for commercial aviation. CAAFI participants have recently completed bio-fuels flight demonstrations. We plan to identify and have approved for use a 100 percent bio-fuel by 2013.

We all recognize that aviation is a global industry and that climate change is a global problem. Therefore, addressing aviation's contribution to climate change merits a global solution. We believe that the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is the best forum to find the harmonized approaches we need for this global industry, as it has both the authority and the expertise in this area.

The ICAO Assembly launched at the end of 2007 the fifteen-nation Group on International Aviation and Climate Change (GIACC). This high-level

group is developing recommendations for a global framework to address international aviation greenhouse gas emissions. The United States fully supports this important initiative. We hope that, ultimately, GIACC will put forward a balanced, performance-based framework to meet aspirational goals which will limit and reduce international aviation emissions. I predict that the keys to GIACC's success will be (1) that the states with the largest air transport sectors agree to do all they can to meet the aspirational goals, (2) that the framework is fully collaborative, with no states or regions imposing measures on foreign carriers without consent, and (3) that the special needs of developing states are taken into account in order to assist them in joining in the global effort.

Allow me to thank once more Minister Kaneko for organizing this ministerial meeting. There is obviously a strong, shared interest in addressing transport's impact on the environment. As I have noted here briefly, there is no one solution. Rather, in the case of aviation emissions, multiple measures will be required. We look forward to working with others in partnership and shared responsibility to tackle the vital challenge of ensuring aviation's benefits to the global economy while reducing its environmental footprint.