



For immediate release

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EUROPEAN AIRLINES AND AIRPORTS SEEK AN END TO NO-FLY UNCERTAINTIES

Brussels, 21 May 2010: European airlines and airports welcomed the initiative of EASA (European Aviation Safety Agency) today to provide guidance for flight operations in condition of volcanic ash contamination. AEA and ACI EUROPE expressed their appreciation for the leadership of the European Commission in seeking to reduce disruptions to air traffic in Europe; in particular they commended the Commission for creating a crisis management structure to better deal with future crises. However, they believe more is required to end the piecemeal approach to the ongoing volcanic ash crisis.

AEA and ACI EUROPE issued an unequivocal call for continued and swift improvement of the current procedures through the development of a uniform European model based on accurate data rather than unverified assumptions. As the Icelandic volcano eruption is now in its sixth week and the travel market enters its peak period, the possibility of further flight restrictions stemming from procedures that remain inappropriate is casting a cloud over airlines, airports, the travelling public and scores of businesses relying on efficient air services.

At a travel conference taking place in Reykjavik this week, **AEA Secretary General Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus** advised his audience that the 'moving goalposts' of the constantly-changing rules over recent weeks had failed to address one fundamental point: that the airlines themselves were the best-qualified to manage the situation.

"It is normal and easy to get to Reykjavik; the fact that I have to say so, is a shame", said the AEA Secretary General. *"Confusion persists, and it has to end. The risks to aviation from airborne volcanic ash are well known and documented. What we need is the best possible information as to where there is ash contamination and in what concentrations. This should involve not only computer modelling but the widest possible use of test-flying, sampling and feedback from the airline operators themselves, to verify and adjust the theoretical models".*

With improved data, the risk zones become more clearly identifiable and precautionary zones are not required. Refining the current models to focus on the hazardous zones should be an absolute priority. *"But once the data is robust and actual, airlines can and must assume the responsibility for the safety of the flights"* added the AEA Secretary General.

In the margins of a visit to ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation) in Montreal, **Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE** commented *"EASA's involvement is a step in the right direction, but further progress is*

needed to deliver a fully harmonised and calibrated European procedure. Until we get there, further random closures of air space cannot be excluded. The resulting uncertainty continues to impact consumer demand.”

ENDS

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Notes to Editors:

ACI EUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International (ACI), the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents over 400 airports in 45 European countries. Member airports handle 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe, welcoming nearly one and half billion passengers each year.

The **Association of European Airlines (AEA)** brings together 36 European established service and scheduled network carriers. These collectively carry 320 million passengers and 6 million tons of cargo each year, operating 2,400 aircraft serving 620 destinations in 160 countries with 10,720 flights a day. They provide around 378,000 jobs directly, and generate a total turnover of €75 billion.