Airports meet Bulc to discuss EU aviation package

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Brussels, 15 October 2015: As the finishing touches are being put to the EU's landmark Aviation Package, Augustin de Romanet, President of ACI EUROPE and President & CEO of Aéroports de Paris, met earlier today with Violeta Bulc, the EU Transport Commissioner. He was accompanied by Arnaud Feist, CEO of Brussels Airport and Armando Brunini, CEO of Aeroporto di Napoli **–** both members of the Board of ACI EUROPE.

With the Aviation Package, the European Commission intends to propose a comprehensive strategy aimed at boosting the competitiveness of European aviation and optimising its role as an enabler of economic growth and job creation. The formal adoption of the Package is currently planned for December.

The 3 CEOs restated their support for the initiative and thanked Commissioner Bulc for her leadership in ensuring that the Aviation Package is amongst the 23 priorities of the Junker Commission for jobs, growth and investment. They stressed the strategic relevance of air connectivity for the EU economy – especially within the context of Europe's increasing dependence on external trade and foreign direct investment: **+10% increase in connectivity is associated with +0.5% increase in GDP per capita**.[1]

They also underlined that Europe still needs to embrace the strategic relevance of aviation. Prominent emerging economies have already made the link, actively supporting air connectivity with aviation growth being part of their economic development policies. In Europe, the **lack of political support for aviation** and **unaligned regulatory intervention** is hampering the development of air connectivity and creating a widening competitive deficit for the European aviation sector. This threatens our global hub positioning and ultimately, the competitiveness of the European economy.

Augustin de Romanet said "*The Aviation Package is a unique opportunity to reset aviation policy with a strong focus on connectivity, consumers and the economy. The issues that need to be addressed are many, starting from our license to grow and the looming airport capacity crunch. They also include scrapping heavy and unfair national aviation taxes, securing access to emerging markets through Open Skies, delivering the Single European Sky and reducing regulatory cost inefficiencies – in particular within aviation security.*"

He added "*All these issues have an impact on our competitiveness and they all require concerted action between EU and national levels. To be bold and actually stand a chance of success, the Aviation Package should not just be about what the Commission can do – it should also be about what Member States will need to do at home to ensure policy alignment in support of connectivity.*"

FOCUS ON CONSUMERS, NOT AIRLINES OR AIRPORTS

In calling for the Aviation Package to focus on **connectivity, consumers and the economy**, ACI EUROPE also urged Commissioner Bulc to resist airline-centric approaches to aviation policy. Recent high profile examples of debates on this include external relations and Open Skies, as well as airport charges.

The 3 CEOs referred to unsubstantiated demands by the top 5 EU airlines to further tighten the regulation of airport charges° – which would essentially allow for an arbitrary transfer of wealth from airports to airlines. This would be at odds with the fact that airports in Europe are businesses in their own right and need to be treated as such. This would also fly in the face of market-based policy making and ultimately compromise connectivity.

Augustin de Romanet commented *"In Europe, airport charges only make up 47% of total airport revenues. This means that airlines are a long way from paying the cost of the infrastructure they use - and indeed are already heavily subsidised by airports. Asking for even more regulatory intervention ignores the reality of airport competition. Crucially, this would also prevent airports from continuing to invest in improving and expanding their facilities. In doing so, incumbent airlines maintain their dominance - undermining competition, limiting the development of connectivity and driving air fares upwards."*

AVAILABILITY OF WATER AT AIRPORTS

As part of its focus on consumers, ACI EUROPE has recently issued a *Recommended Practice* on the provision of water, in the context of the current regulatory restrictions which prevent passengers from taking bottled water through security checkpoints.

In line with this *Recommended Practice*, a growing number of airports are making water available after security checkpoints through water fountains or low cost water initiatives, making bottled water available for €1.

On this initiative, **Commissioner Violeta Bulc** commented *"I fully support ACI EUROPE's proactive approach towards improving the passenger - and consumer - experience across the European airport network. This initiative allowing air passengers easier, cheaper access to water is the right move. I congratulate the airports who have already led the way and urge others to implement this recommended practice as soon as they can."*

According to ACI EUROPE's tracking of the implementation of their *Recommended Practice*, currently **126 airports** welcoming almost **50% of European passengers** have either implemented or have imminent plans to implement the *Recommended Practice* on water in the months to come. ACI EUROPE will continue to track the initiative's progress.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

[1]This figure is one of the findings from *Economic Impact of European Airports*, a study by Inter*VISTAS* available to download here:
https://www.aci-europe.org/component/downloads/downloads/4159.html

°For more information on the Top 5 EU Airlines' call for additional airport charges regulation, ACI EUROPE's first reaction release can be read here:
https://www.aci-europe.org/component/downloads/downloads/4327.html

The following airports are among those which have already implemented the recommended practice: Aéroports de Paris, Athens, Avinor (Ålesund, Bergen, Bodo, Oslo, Stavanger & Trondheim airports), Brussels, Copenhagen, DAA (Cork & Dublin), Frankfurt, Hermes (Larnaca & Paphos airports), Lithuanian Airports (3 airports) and Munich.

To find out more about how airports are working to improve the passenger experience, download ACI EUROPE's *Guidelines to Passenger Services at European Airports* here:
https://www.aci-europe.org/component/downloads/downloads/3879.html

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ACI EUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International (ACI), the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents close to 500 airports in 45 European countries.

*In 2014, our member airports handled over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe, welcoming more than **1.8 billion passengers**, **18.4 million** tonnes of freight and **21.2 million** aircraft movements. These airports contribute to the employment of **12.3 million people**, generating **€675 billion each year (4.1%) of GDP** in Europe.*

EVERY FLIGHT BEGINS AT THE AIRPORT.