

The Paris Agreement



... SETS A LONG-TERM GOAL FOR ALL MAN-MADE EMISSIONS

The Agreement commits parties to limit an increase in global temperatures to well below 2°C, pursue efforts to limit that increase to 1.5°C, and reduce emissions to net zero. This would achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases since the second half of the 20th century. Not only would this transpire on the basis of equity, but in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty. As aviation emissions, both international and domestic, are very much caused by humans, this directly brings them into the ambition and requirements of the Agreement.



... ESTABLISHES THE PRINCIPLE OF INCREASING AMBITION OVER TIME

The contributions put forward by parties to date are insufficient to achieve the 1.5/well below 2°C objectives. The Agreement therefore requires the ambition of these contributions to rise over time in order to reach the 1.5/well below 2°C objectives. These increases in ambition will take place as part of a regular, five-year review process starting with a stocktake in 2018. Simply maintaining the United Nations International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Global Market Based Measure (GMBM) target of stabilizing net emissions at 2020 levels will be inconsistent with the 1.5/well below 2°C objective. It is important that the ICAO commits to substantially increasing its ambition to bring its reduction targets in line with temperature objectives as soon as possible.



... DOES NOT TELL STATES HOW TO REDUCE INTERNATIONAL AVIATION EMISSIONS

Parties involved in the Paris Agreement have submitted pledges known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs); however, for the most part these NDCs focus on domestic emissions and therefore do not address emissions from international transport (international aviation and shipping). While the Paris Agreement's objective covers all anthropogenic emissions including international transport, the Agreement does not specify how these emissions are to be addressed.

However, at the ICAO 2013 Triennial Assembly, ICAO member states agreed to work on a range of measures to limit aviation's impact on climate, including establishing a GMBM to stabilize net emissions at 2020 levels. The work to establish a GMBM is supposed to conclude at ICAO's Assembly in October of this year. All parties and stakeholders should work to ensure the spirit of Paris is reflected in the outcome of this Assembly.

While the Paris Agreement does not determine how emissions from international aviation are to be addressed, emissions from domestic aviation clearly fall under NDCs. Domestic aviation is responsible for one third of total aviation emissions, and parties to the Agreement must adopt measures within their NDCs to limit its climate impact.



... INCLUDES IMPORTANT PROVISIONS ON THE FUNCTIONING OF CARBON MARKETS

As reducing emissions within the aviation sector is, in the short term, challenging and relatively expensive, the GMBM will rely heavily on offsets (i.e. emission reductions in other sectors). Offsets are purchased on global carbon markets, and Article 6 of the Paris Agreement contains important provisions to ensure the environmental integrity of carbon markets established under the Agreement. These provisions, such as avoidance of double counting (where multiple parties claim the same emission reduction) and support for sustainable development, provide a very helpful context as ICAO works to complete its own GMBM.



... WAS ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF ALL ICAO MEMBER STATES

All the ICAO member states working for an outcome on the GMBM at this October's Assembly are also parties to the UNFCCC and participated in the adoption of the Paris Agreement. The spirit and dedication that created a successful outcome in Paris must continue at this fall's Assembly. This includes a commitment to act from all member states, a recognition of differentiation in a manner consistent with ICAO's Chicago Convention, and a clear commitment and process to increase the ambition of the GMBM and other ICAO measures over time.



IN CONCLUSION THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND THE ICAO MBM ARE MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE

The Paris Agreement and the ICAO process to adopt effective climate measures are not separate. The Paris Agreement covers all anthropogenic emissions, sets out important principles on carbon markets, and sends a clear signal that the aviation sector must act. While measures adopted at the ICAO level must have unique features – such as respecting the principle of non-discrimination between airline operators – this is not a barrier to swift and effective action to reduce aviation's climate impact. The spotlight is now on ICAO to live up to its commitment to finalize a GMBM at its upcoming Assembly in October 2016.