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Agreement needed in ICAO on global MBM

Statement by Climate Action Network International

On September 24th in Montreal, the 38th Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) will take place, and high on the agenda will be how to control fast-growing greenhouse gas emissions from international air travel.

After more than 15 years of discussions of market based measures (MBMs) to put a price on carbon pollution and ensure that emissions targets are met, countries have still not agreed to implement a global MBM. Agreement is now within reach but the draft agreement that recently emerged from ICAO Council, to be voted on at Assembly, would delay a decision to adopt a global MBM for another three years. The Climate Action Network (CAN) does not accept any further delay in agreeing an MBM and believe that the text currently on the table text must be improved in key respects:

- The agreement must commit to adopt (not just develop) a global MBM by the next ICAO Assembly, to take effect by 2016. Anything less will send the signal that the aviation sector is not serious about making significant progress to protect the global climate. Further delay could also result in a patchwork of regional and national schemes, and would justify decisions and direction on controlling aviation emissions from other bodies.
- The agreement must ensure the development of an ambitious MBM that reflects the latest science on the scale and urgency of emissions reductions required, and a full carbon pricing mechanism that reflects the polluter-pays principle. Full consideration should also be given to revenue generation for climate finance, especially for adaptation and mitigation efforts in developing countries, noting that any finance used towards developed country climate finance commitments must have no net incidence on developing countries. After all, it is business and relatively affluent travellers who make up the bulk of air passengers, and they can afford to pay for their pollution.
- Any global MBM must cover all emissions from flights on the routes covered under the mechanism, and not be restricted to the airspace of any particular country or region.

The final agreement must address the impacts on of those developing countries that could be particularly affected by an MBM, such as small island states and least developed countries. Route based approaches can be found to reflect special circumstances and respective capabilities, including the maturity of aviation in different countries, which maintain the environmental integrity of the MBM and ensure the vast majority of emissions from international aviation are covered. Differential use of revenue generated can also ensure an equitable outcome.

The time has come for a decisive outcome that leaves no doubt about ICAO's ability and determination to control international aviation's growing climate impact. The global aviation sector has an opportunity to show leadership and vision, rather than further attempts to delay progress.