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Revised EU ETS aviation proposal heads in the wrong direction, warns ACI EUROPE

Brussels, 17 July 2026: The European Commission's revised EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) proposal is well intentioned. However, the proposed extension of its geographical scope beyond the EU/EEA to all departing flights within a radius of 5,000 km ultimately heads in the wrong direction.

Aviation is, by its very nature, a global industry. The solution to aviation's emissions must therefore be global – not an expanding patchwork of regional measures. A strengthened Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) remains the most appropriate global carbon-pricing framework to address international aviation emissions. Expanding the EU ETS for aviation beyond the EU/EEA risks undermining CORSIA – and, with it, global efforts to reduce aviation emissions. Introducing unilateral regional requirements, increasing regulatory complexity and creating market asymmetries cannot be the way forward.

There are, however, welcome elements in the proposal. ACI EUROPE welcomes the Commission's efforts to channel EU ETS revenues towards hard-to-abate sectors, including aviation, and to accelerate the deployment of Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF). But this will only deliver if those revenues are strictly earmarked for aviation decarbonisation – which is not the case for now.

ACI EUROPE also welcomes the continued exemption for the EU's outermost regions, where air connectivity is an essential lifeline for citizens and businesses, as well as being indispensable to territorial cohesion.

Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE, said: *"While the Commission's proposal marks an important step in the debate over the future of Europe's climate and aviation policies, one principle must remain clear: the decarbonisation imperative must preserve competitiveness and cohesion. It must also reinforce – not fragment – the international framework for reducing aviation emissions."*

"Aviation needs an effective global carbon-pricing system. Europe should therefore focus its efforts on strengthening CORSIA, while ensuring that the revenues generated through the EU ETS are effectively reinvested in aviation's decarbonisation."

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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 over 600 airports in 55 countries. Our members facilitate over 95% of commercial air traffic in Europe. Airports and air connectivity support 14 million jobs, generating €851 billion in European economic activity (5% of GDP). In response to the Climate Emergency, in June 2019 our members committed to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions for operations under their control by 2050, without offsetting.