CANSO welcomes and strongly supports call for action to improve European airspace and to reduce air traffic delays

On 13 July CANSO, the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation, announced that it is seeking strong cooperation and a greater sense of urgency to address the forecast air traffic capacity shortages and delays in Europe.

It welcomes and supports the joint call for action from the European Commission and the European Parliament. CANSO and its Members are working hard to improve air traffic management performance in Europe but States need to ensure a pan-European approach with more cross-border cooperation, adequate funding for infrastructure expansion and modernisation, and appropriate performance-based regulation.

Jeff Poole, Director General CANSO, commented: ‘It is now widely recognised that the unprecedented growth in air traffic in Europe will create challenges of insufficient capacity and an unacceptable increase in delays unless urgent new actions and initiatives are taken. CANSO and its Members are playing their part through new investments, technologies and processes. However, the step changes that are needed to address the capacity and delay challenges can only be achieved by removing the present constraints to a true pan-European approach to airspace management – with a greater sense of urgency.’

Priorities for CANSO and its Members are to provide a seamless, uninterrupted safe service while improving European airspace; build a modern and efficient air traffic infrastructure; and reduce delays whilst controlling costs.

CANSO Member air navigation service providers (ANSPs) in Europe invested €6.2 billion between 2011 and 2016 in new ATM infrastructure. They continue to take steps to reduce delays and improve efficiency, such as collaborative decision-making, air traffic flow management, providing more flexibility for planes to fly their chosen routes and implementing new technologies and procedures.

However, on their own, these steps will not be sufficient to overcome the anticipated capacity and delay challenges, it is reported. CANSO therefore welcomes and strongly supports the joint call of the European Commission and the European Parliament for EU Member States to resume discussions on improving European airspace; to build a modern and efficient air traffic infrastructure; and reduce delays.

States can help to achieve this by ensuring adequate funding for ATM infrastructure expansion and modernisation and by enacting outcome-based
regulation that encourages performance improvements. States can also help to create the right environment for improved cooperation among all stakeholders in Europe, particularly air navigation service providers, airports and airlines.

CANSO shares the concerns of the Commission and Parliament that passengers face increased delays. These delays have various causes such as lack of capacity both in the air and on the ground, technical problems with aircraft, airport congestion and bad weather. CANSO and its Members will continue to focus on reducing those delays which are genuinely addressable by air traffic management. In the short and medium term however, it is difficult to increase ATM services to handle extra traffic due to the long time required to train air traffic controllers and to develop, fund and implement new infrastructure. In addition, as airlines insist that charges are kept as low as possible, ANSPs have been careful not to provide more capacity than the agreed forecast requirements.

Jeff Poole concluded by saying: ‘CANSO believes strongly that a coordinated approach across all stakeholders can create the step changes that are necessary in the management of European airspace and deliver the biggest benefits.

‘We are therefore urging all stakeholders, in particular Member States, to work together with a renewed sense of urgency on delivering the objectives of a Single European Sky; invest in modernising ATM infrastructure; and enact facilitating regulation that is performance-based rather than prescriptive.

‘We welcome the joint call for action from the European Commission and the European Parliament and we are committed to work with them, States, industry and other stakeholders to ensure Europe’s airspace has adequate capacity and is fit for purpose now and in the future.’

About CANSO
CANSO – the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation – is the global voice of air traffic management (ATM) worldwide. CANSO Members support over 85% of world air traffic, Members share information and develop new policies, with the ultimate aim of improving air navigation services (ANS) on the ground and in the air. CANSO represents its Members’ views to a wide range of aviation stakeholders, including the International Civil Aviation Organization, where it has official Observer status. CANSO has an extensive network of Associate Members drawn from across the aviation industry.

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