

ICAO and Aviation Emissions: The clock is ticking

ICAO or How not to be constructive

Since Kyoto, ICAO has failed to deliver or agree any mandatory global policies to mitigate emissions. The Organisation closed the door, one by one, on almost every conceivable market measure for reducing aviation's emissions and now, under pressure to act, is deeply divided over adopting a global solution:

Aviation's impact on climate change

In 1997 the parties to the Kyoto Protocol agreed that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from international aviation should be 'limited' or 'reduced' working through the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), a UN agency responsible for setting international standards for civil aviation.

CO₂ emissions from aviation have been growing 4.3% on average per year between 1999 and 2009¹ and today aviation alone accounts for 4.9% of the cumulative climate change impact of human activities.

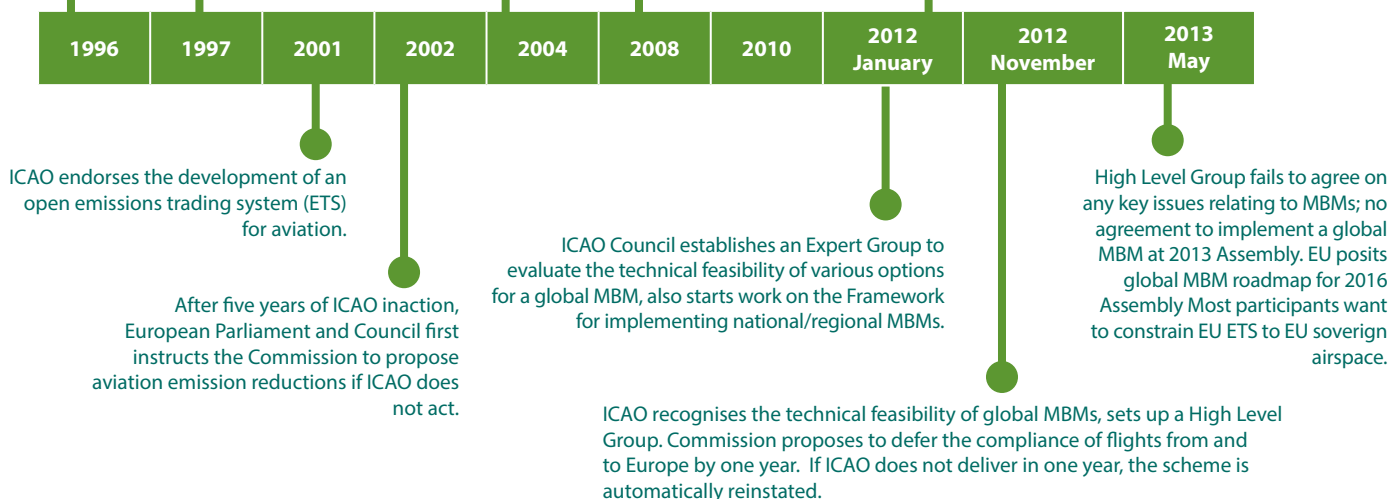
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The Kyoto Protocol asks developed countries to work through ICAO to limit/reduce aviation emissions.

After 11 years of ICAO inaction, EU includes aviation in the EU ETS commencing 2012.

ICAO Assembly adopts guiding principles for aviation market-based measures (MBM) and calls for the development by 2013 of a 'Framework' for MBMs: a set of rules that countries should respect when implementing such measures individually. The Assembly also endorses a decision to develop a CO₂ standard for new aircraft – a move which had been ruled out back in 2001.



So, what's at stake?

ICAO's High Level Group needs to make rapid progress resolving issues and the ICAO Council needs to have a global proposal ready by the June Council in order for the triennial Assembly in September 2013 to be able to agree a global measure and the Framework. Failure to act at the Assembly would trigger automatic reinstatement of the full provisions of the EU ETS and confirm ICAO's status as having failed on climate change.

¹ ICAO Environmental Report 2010, available at: http://legacy.icao.int/icao/en/env2010/Pubs/EnvReport2010/ICAO_EnvReport10-Outlook_en.pdf

² <http://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/new-ICAO-council-high-level-group-to-focus-on-environmental-policy-challenges.aspx>

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ICAO endorses the development of an open emissions trading system (ETS) for aviation.

After five years of ICAO inaction, European Parliament and Council first instructs the Commission to propose aviation emission reductions if ICAO does not act.

ICAO Council establishes an Expert Group to evaluate the technical feasibility of various options for a global MBM, also starts work on the Framework for implementing national/regional MBMs.

High Level Group fails to agree on any key issues relating to MBMs; no agreement to implement a global MBM at 2013 Assembly. EU posits global MBM roadmap for 2016 Assembly. Most participants want to constrain EU ETS to EU sovereign airspace.

ICAO recognises the technical feasibility of global MBMs, sets up a High Level Group. Commission proposes to defer the compliance of flights from and to Europe by one year. If ICAO does not deliver in one year, the scheme is automatically reinstated.

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