



IFAIMA, IFATCA, IFATSEA and ITF joint statement on Air Navigation Services

During these trying times, IFAIMA, IFATCA, IFATSEA and ITF would like to offer our deepest condolences to the families of those who lost a loved one to the pandemic. We express our sincere sympathies to those affected by the virus and the measures in place to combat the spread, and share everyone's concerns with regards to the long term impacts on society.

We understand the restriction of passenger flights is an effective mitigation to the spread. However, it must also be recognised that the efficient transit of freight flights is critical to the timely distribution of medical supplies and personnel. In a number of remote locations, it is of paramount importance to facilitate the timely operations of MEDEVAC flights; these air missions are indeed essential to transport those who require immediate and critical healthcare towards facilities that can accommodate their needs.

Amid this pandemic, Air Traffic Management (ATM) staff and, in particular, air traffic controllers continue to work, keeping our skies safe. They provide crucial services to the medical, humanitarian, military, repatriation and cargo flights still taking place. International organisations, governments, regulators and Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) must ensure continuity of operations by complying with the health and sanitary requirements that this situation demands. They must also provide sufficient financial and regulatory support to the ANSPs to fulfill their mission [1].

IFAIMA, IFATCA, IFATSEA and ITF are working closely with the relevant United Nations agencies and other key international organisations to provide guidance material, gather and share best practices and offer support to those associations and professionals in need of assistance.

In the longer term, the COVID-19 pandemic will remain a global health emergency for the foreseeable future and has triggered an economic catastrophe. Millions of people are already suffering the dire economic circumstances as businesses shut down, income is reduced, and jobs disappear.

We thank those governments that have put in place income protection for workers and urge that any remaining people not covered should also be assisted.

It is crucial that governments understand the importance of aviation and support the aviation industry. Laying off highly qualified staff and/or implementing irreversible cost-reduction measures will delay the recovery of the aviation industry and should be avoided at all cost. Protecting these jobs in this crisis and enabling the training for existing and new staff will guarantee that aviation can support functioning global supply chains and ensure that they are capable to lead in the economic recovery when the pandemic has been contained.

The current situation highlights that Air Navigation Services (ANS) are part of a country's essential infrastructure, playing a key role in the distribution of much-needed medical and other supplies to address this health crisis. This was for instance recognised by the EU Ministers of Transport in their most recent video conference [2] at the end of April 2020. Regrettably, the funding of this critical infrastructure is at risk due to the flawed financing mechanism that includes airspace users wanting to defer the payment of route charges already incurred. This will severely impact both the current and future operation of ANSPs

IFAIMA, IFATCA, IFATSEA and ITF therefore call on governments to provide immediate financial and regulatory support for all air navigation service providers, in order to ensure the provision of air navigation services is financially supported to overcome this crisis and ensure that sufficient essential qualified staff is available when commercial air traffic returns. We also urge to investigate alternative and sustainable ways of financing these and other essential services, making them less dependent on volatility and economic downturns.

[1] The provision of Air Navigation Services (ANS) is a State's task, in accordance with Article 28 of the Chicago Convention. It is a State's task to "provide, in its territory, airports, radio services, meteorological services and other air navigation facilities to facilitate international air navigation, in accordance with the standards and practices recommended or established from time to time, pursuant to this Convention".

[2] <https://eu2020.hr/Home/DocumentDownload/216>