

## **Europe's air navigation services join forces - International stakeholder forum in Brussels**

**Geneva, February 16, 2007.** A new cross-border airspace structure in Europe – which airlines have been demanding for years – could soon become a reality. Six European States, their air navigation service providers and the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation EUROCONTROL have convened the first international forum in Brussels today to discuss this issue.

With the Single European Sky, the European Commission has called for the creation of so-called functional airspace blocks (FAB) in order to respond to the challenges resulting from growing air traffic in Europe. These blocks of airspace would be organised according to traffic flows rather than national boundaries as is the case today in most parts of Europe. Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland as well as the Eurocontrol centre in Maastricht are currently conducting a feasibility study to determine how a common airspace block, to be called FAB Europe Central, would meet the goals set by the European Commission.

Consultation of all stakeholders is essential to ensure that the requirements of all parties are taken into account during the planning process. This mainly concerns the airlines and military airspace users but also airports, decision-makers, the industry, meteorological service providers, neighbouring States as well as air navigation services personnel.

Air safety, of course, is the top priority but capacity, cost-effectiveness, efficiency and last but not least environmental aspects and sustainability are the drivers for all actions. The FAB Europe Central will be realised through a substantial degree of cooperation, across the full range of air navigation service provider activities: operations, technical systems and services, human resource management and development of new activities.

The airspace of the six countries, located as they are in the core of Europe, is one of the busiest and most complex in the world. Most of the large European airports and major civil and military airways are located in this area.

The participating States are well aware that this project is an enormous challenge and that many aspects will have to be taken into account. This task can only be accomplished step by step and the project is expected to extend over several years. It is, however, of great importance to set the stage for these future developments today and to already identify all potential improvement opportunities that can be seized in the short term.

The links to the other European countries and the consideration of military interests as well as social and cultural aspects will not be neglected. In the end, the parliaments of the individual States will have to agree on the plan. Once the feasibility study has been completed as planned in 2008, implementation can begin.

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