

Take-off Toolkit: Acting on Aviation Emissions

Background

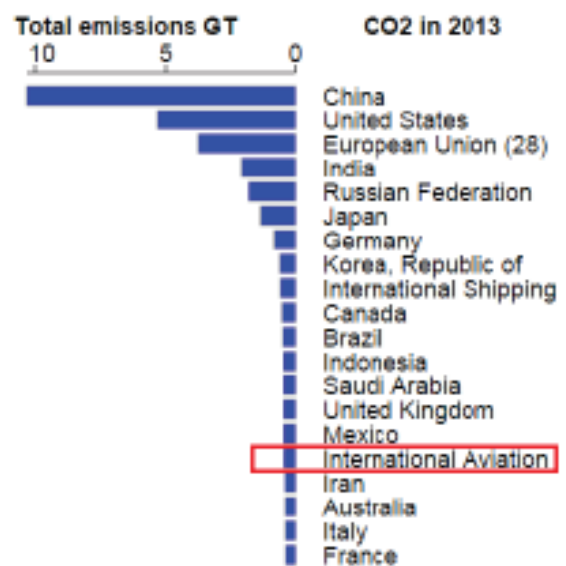
In October this year, member countries of the UN’s International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) will decide what role the aviation sector should play in tackling climate change. As this will be the first important milestone in tackling aviation emissions, civil society must play a decisive role in lobbying for stringent rules, ambitious targets, and transparent decision making.

This Action Toolkit is designed to provide you with a background on aviation, present Carbon Market Watch’s key asks on the global market-based mechanism (GMBM) that has been proposed by the aviation industry, and explain how civil society can have play a decisive role in pressuring national authorities and airlines to adopt effective and ambitious climate solutions.

Why is action needed in the aviation sector?

Emissions from international aviation grew by over 75% between 1990 and 2012. In 2014, the sector emitted more CO₂ into the atmosphere than the combined emissions of the 129 lowest emitting countries. This is equivalent to 4.9% of global yearly greenhouse gas emissions. If it were a country its emissions would put it well into the top 20. With a business as usual scenario, aviation emissions are expected to grow by up to 300% by 2050¹

Under the Paris Agreement, all countries are required to act to help to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Developed countries are to take the lead by committing to “economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets”. This objective of the Paris Agreement can only be fulfilled if the aviation industry, a top ten global polluter, contributes its fair share in reducing emissions rapidly.



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How is ICAO proposing to tackle emissions?

The aviation industry has proposed a number of solutions to tackle its emissions including technological advancements (e.g. biofuels and new aircraft designs) and operational improvements (shorter taxiing times and improved air traffic control to minimise emissions).

Since technological and operational measures will not eliminate all plane emissions, the majority of the effort to tackle aviation’s climate impact will be done through a measure to offset emissions from the sector via a global market-based mechanism (GMBM). In October 2016, countries are expected to adopt

¹ http://www.icao.int/environmental-protection/GIACC/Giacc-4/CENV_GIACC4_IP1_IP2%20IP3.pdf

a GMBM that, starting in 2021, should ensure that the aviation sector will offset all the growth of emissions above 2020 levels: the 'carbon neutral growth 2020' goal and this is the primary function of the GMBM.

An agreement is expected to be ratified in October 2016. This date is key, as ICAO only meets every three years. 2016 is the moment to make sure that ICAO reaches an ambitious agreement, with provisions to strengthen it over time. The world can't wait until 2019 to debate this issue again.

The civil society has a key role in pushing ICAO towards greater action on emissions from the aviation sector!

Challenges regarding ICAO and the GMBM

There are three distinct but interlinked challenges regarding the current ICAO process:

- we need to **ensure a proper ambition level for aviation to help to keep temperatures below 1.5°C;**
- **improve the transparency of the decision making process;**
- **and ensure the environmental integrity of the GMBM.**

✓ **Ambition**

Without the participation of the growing aviation sector, staying below 1.5°C is impossible. The GMBM must be the first step towards keeping temperatures below 1.5°C. This means agreeing on a mandatory target, ensuring a stringent cap on emissions, and providing opportunities to increase ambition over time. As of now, ICAO has presented an aspirational (non-binding) goal of offsetting any emissions that go above 2020 levels. The cap on emissions and ratchet mechanism have yet to be decided.

Aviation must do their fair share in the fight against climate change. As they have been slow to move forward with a plan to tackle emissions, **it is up to civil society to put the pressure on ICAO to be ambitious and ratchet efforts over time.**

✓ **Transparency**

ICAO is notoriously secretive and non-transparent. Observer NGOs are gathered under the [International Coalition for Sustainable Aviation](#) (ICSA), of which Carbon Market Watch is member. This small environmental coalition is, however, massively outnumbered by airline companies, federations and manufacturers, who do not share the same levels of ambition for creating an environmentally sound GMBM. Currently, this lobby group outweighs the influence civil society has on ICAO. As a result, the technical and political meetings that shape aviation's climate response have very limited public participation and information is difficult to access.

In the lead up to the 2016 decision on a GMBM, it is important that ICAO and the government representatives involved in the process know that the world is watching and demand effective solutions. This is where civil society engagement is crucial.

✓ High environmental Standards

Currently, it is difficult to know how rigorous the standards are for the GMBM. In a process lacking transparency, it is difficult to ensure that the solutions being developed respect the necessary environmental standards.

It is of utmost importance that the mitigation projects that will compensate for aviation's emissions deliver real, permanent, and verified reductions while fulfilling strong environmental and social criteria. The quality of the projects and whether there are good accounting that avoids credits being double counted will determine the overall effectiveness and environmental integrity of aviation's efforts. If the GMBM is weak, it will not benefit the climate.

This means it is of the utmost importance that NGOs call for needed environmental standards in the GMBM to ensure an effective response to aviation emissions.

Carbon Market Watch's recommendations for the GMBM

- **Long-term Ambition:** The GMBM must begin to make a real contribution towards achieving the overall goal of limiting global average temperature increases to 1.5°C agreed by all countries in the UN Paris climate Agreement. This requires agreeing upon measures to achieve the goal of carbon neutrality after 2020, along with provisions that require the ratcheting up of ambition over time.
- **High credit quality:** Allowed offsetting credits must meeting the following criteria²:
 - Real, additional, permanent and verified
 - No double counting of efforts: this will require good quality tracking of credits
 - “No harm” principle: social protection of people in project areas and actively promote sustainable development
- **Negative list:** Agreement of a negative list of ineligible project types that do not meet the above criteria, including:
 - fossil fuel power plants
 - nuclear facilities
 - hydroelectric power production project activities with a generating capacity exceeding 20MW
 - projects in the land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) sectors, including REDD, with the exception of peat land rewetting that is not exposed to the non-permanence risks of other LULUCF project types
 - projects involving the destruction of trifluoromethane (HFC-23) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) from adipic acid production
 - projects for geological CO₂ capture and sequestration

² For more information check out our policy brief: [Aviation's Credibility on Environmental Integrity](#)

Taking action!

We must act now for an ambitious agreement in the October ICAO Assembly

Your country is an important actor of the ICAO process. You can make a difference by calling on your governments to push for a robust GMBM that only recognises high quality credits that support sustainable development, while introducing good rules for accounting that avoid credits being counted twice and guarantees there is transparency in the ICAO process for all governments, observers and media.

Upcoming dates. Technical and political discussions will continue all the way up until the General Assembly in October 2016. As a result, there will be many moments to make your voice heard.

Here are some important upcoming dates:

- 21 March - 8 April: Global Aviation Dialogues ([GLADs](#)) will be held in regions around the world discussing the GMBM proposal. Ahead of these meetings, it will be important to send to national governments key recommendations for a robust GMBM. We also value your help in sharing information on the discussion in your region:
 - Middle Eastern GLAD: 21-22 March in UAE
 - African GLAD: 24-25 March in Dakar, Senegal
 - Asian GLAD: 29-30 March in Legian, Indonesia
 - European GLAD: 4-5 April in Utrecht, Netherlands
 - Latin American GLAD: 7-8 April in Mexico city, Mexico
- 13 April: Deadline for states to submit working papers on the proposal for the High Level Meeting
- 11-13 May: High Level Meeting in Montreal – semi-transparent (i.e. observers might be in but media probably aren't)
- 16 May-17 June: ICAO Council (session 208) meets – last Council before the Assembly, will decide the final proposal for the Assembly. 27 September - 7 October 2016: 39th ICAO General Assembly

Each date outlined above is an opportunity for NGOs to pressure their governments to push aviation to reduce their emissions in line with climate science and with policies that are environmentally sound.

This can be done through:

- **Public pressure: tell your government officials to be strong on aviation emissions!** We at Carbon Market Watch are currently seeking help from of national NGOs in ICAO Council member countries to ask their environment ministries to engage in the GLADs. Environment ministries can help open up the ICAO process and push for a stronger outcome for the climate.
- **Campaigning: tweet to your national airline companies** (#FlightPlan1.5) asking for a high quality GMBM, share information with other local NGOs to make noise around the issue
- **Join our campaign!:**
 - Request **policy and event updates** so you can monitor the ICAO process as it progresses
 - **Share campaign material and content across our aviation mailing list.** To be subscribed to the list, write to pj.brasier@carbonmarketwatch.org
 - **Participate in (bi-lateral) briefing call/webinar** with partner NGOs, giving background on the issues affecting aviation.