

# Take-off Toolkit: Acting on Aviation Emissions

## Contact information:

Pierre-Jean Brasier, Network coordinator

[Pj.brasier@carbonmarketwatch.org](mailto:Pj.brasier@carbonmarketwatch.org)

Kelsey Perlman, Policy researcher – Aviation

[kelsey.perlman@carbonmarketwatch.org](mailto:kelsey.perlman@carbonmarketwatch.org)

## Background

In October this year, member countries of the UN's [International Civil Aviation Organization](http://www.icao.int) (ICAO) will decide how the aviation sector will tackle climate change. As this will be the first important international milestone in addressing the issue, civil society must act now to play a decisive role in lobbying for stringent rules, ambitious targets, and transparent decision-making.

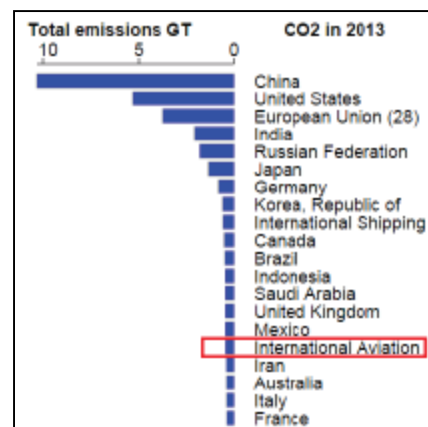
This Action Toolkit is designed to provide you with a background on aviation, present Carbon Market Watch's key asks on the proposed global market-based mechanism (GMBM), and explain how civil society can make a difference in pressuring national authorities and airlines to adopt effective and ambitious 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 CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere than the combined emissions of the 129 lowest emitting countries.

This is equivalent to 4.9% of all annual global warming. If international aviation 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 2050<sup>1</sup>!

Under the Paris Agreement, countries have committed to present “economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets” and to limit global warming to 1.5°C. 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.



**With a business as usual scenario, aviation emissions are expected to grow by up to 300% by 2050!**

## 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 minimize emissions).

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.icao.int/environmental-protection/GIACC/GIACC-4/CENV\\_GIACC4\\_IP1\\_IP2%20IP3.pdf](http://www.icao.int/environmental-protection/GIACC/GIACC-4/CENV_GIACC4_IP1_IP2%20IP3.pdf)

Since technological and operational measures will not eliminate all airplane 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 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. Some countries are expected to be granted exemptions based on Common but Differentiated Responsibilities, which risks undermining the overall goal. It is therefore vitally important that these exemptions be taken into consideration so as to maintain the integrity of the overall goal.

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.

**Civil society organisations have 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 in the current ICAO process:**

- **Agreeing a proper ambition level for aviation to keep temperatures below 1.5C;**
- **Improving the transparency of the decision making process;**
- **Ensuring the environmental integrity of the GMBM.**

### **Ambition**

**Without the participation of the whole rapidly growing aviation sector, limiting global warming to below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels is impossible.** The GMBM must be the first step towards keeping temperatures below 1.5°C. This means agreeing on a mandatory target, making sure that it is achieved by tackling emissions in other ways from exempt states, and increasing ambition over time. Currently, ICAO has presented an aspirational (non-binding) goal of offsetting any emissions that go above 2020 levels. Treatment of emissions from exempt states and a ratchet mechanism have yet to be agreed on.

**Aviation must do its fair share in the fight against climate change.** As the international community has been slow to move forward with a plan to tackle emissions, **it is up to civil society to maintain pressure on ICAO to be ambitious and ratchet up effort over time.**

### **Transparency and Governance**

**ICAO is notoriously secretive and intransparent.** Observer NGOs have formed 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 to create an environmentally sound GMBM. 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 action. Civil society engagement is crucial now.**

## ✈️ High Environmental Standards

**Currently, the GMBM standards are gravely insufficient.** Criteria for buying offset credits are merely “guidance”, or in other words, non-binding. It is of utmost importance that mitigation projects developed to compensate for aviation’s emissions actually deliver real, additional, permanent, and verified reductions and fulfill strong environmental and social criteria.

The quality of the projects and whether there are robust accounting rules that avoid reductions being counted twice (or more) will determine the overall effectiveness and environmental integrity of aviation’s efforts. Emission units criteria need to be strong and binding if we want the GMBM to be anything more than a greenwashing exercise.

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

## Carbon Market Watch’s recommendations for the GMBM

### AMBITION

- Recognition of the need to pursue efforts to limit global average temperature increase to **below 1.5°C**.
- Agreeing the carbon neutral growth 2020 (CNG2020) goal as a **binding** first step, along with a **review clause that requires ambition to be raised in the GMBM every 3 years**.
- The CNG2020 goal is a minimum. Any **exemptions, e.g. for new entrants or poorer countries, in the GMBM should be compensated by greater emissions reductions by non-exempt participants**.

### HIGH ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS

- Credit quality criteria for purchasing offset credits should be **mandatory for all operators**. To facilitate operator offset purchases, a **negative list should be established** to ban projects with known negative environmental or social impacts (eg. Large hydro, REDD+, fossil fuel projects).
- **Projects should positively contribute to the host country’s sustainable development**, in line with the Paris Agreement, and not just ‘do no harm’.
- Robust accounting must **ensure that credits are not counted multiple times**, and be transparent and consistent with efforts and actions taken under the UNFCCC.

### TRANSPARENCY and GOVERNANCE

- **The public should have access to information and the opportunity to provide input to the governance committee** regarding concerns on the quantity and types of emissions credits being used in the GMBM. Such transparency and options for participation are essential to confidence in the measure. **Those involved in decision making should have no conflict of interest**, including commercial concerns.

# Taking action!

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

**Your country is an important actor in the ICAO process. You can make a difference** by calling on your governments to push for a robust GMBM that is limited to 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 multiple opportunities to make your voice heard.

Here are some important upcoming dates:

- 11-13 May: High Level Meeting in Montreal – semi-transparent (i.e. observers might be let in but media probably won't be) meeting focusing on deliberations on the draft Assembly Resolution text on a global MBM scheme and making recommendations to the Council, in preparation for the 39th Session of the ICAO Assembly, to be held from 27 September to 7 October 2016.
- 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: 39<sup>th</sup> ICAO General Assembly meets – when the GMBM proposal will be voted on.

**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 national NGOs in ICAO Council member countries to ask their environment ministries to defend stronger standards. 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. We will provide you with infographics and tweet/facebook post examples in the coming weeks.
- **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 subscribe to the list, write to [pj.brasier@carbonmarketwatch.org](mailto:pj.brasier@carbonmarketwatch.org)
  - **Participate in [CMW webinar on May 4th](#) (or watch it again)** with partner NGOs, giving background on the issues affecting aviation. For more information write to [pj.brasier@carbonmarketwatch.org](mailto:pj.brasier@carbonmarketwatch.org)