

We must act now to keep our skies safe

Amsterdam, 20 March 2020: The COVID-19 pandemic has plunged the aviation industry into an unprecedented crisis, and action is needed now to maintain the stability and resilience of the whole aviation system, and to keep our skies safe in the future. CANSO - the association that represents the air traffic management (ATM) industry - strongly urges States to protect air navigation service providers (ANSPs) from financial collapse.

The ATM industry is under severe pressure. ANSP revenues are directly related to the volume of air traffic they control and so they are extremely vulnerable to the dramatic decrease in air traffic currently being experienced across the globe.

“The current crisis has unfortunately hit our airline customers hard, but airlines deferring payment or not paying at all for air navigation services is absolutely not the solution,” said CANSO Director General, Simon Hocquard. “We need to make sure we do not create long term damage to the aviation system and avoid one company’s solution being another’s problem.”

“Unlike the airlines, we cannot suspend operations and lay off a large proportion of our staff,” Simon explained. “We have to continue to keep our operations running safely, to keep our sectors manned in order to ensure the safe transit of aircraft including cargo flights delivering vital medical supplies and food. We cannot close our airspace, we still have flights to manage, albeit at a reduced level. The airlines and society rely on the ANSPs to provide a safe service when the traffic comes back, and so the ANSPs must be kept solvent as well as the airlines.”

As well as keeping their employees healthy and safe, many ANSPs are introducing operational measures aimed at helping the industry as much as possible such as removing constraints to shorten routes and maximise flight efficiency. They are also deploying cost containment measures but a decrease in revenue could significantly impair their ability to safely and seamlessly handle traffic when the volumes inevitably pick up again.

“Air traffic management is a critical part of our national infrastructures and we must protect it. That starts by making sure we do not cut off the essential revenue stream that enables them to provide a vital and safe service today and, in the future.” Simon Hocquard added.

CANSO urges national decision-makers to enable financial support for the ANSPs, airlines, airports, handling agents all of which would help to ensure stability and resilience of the entire aviation industry.

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About CANSO - the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation - is the global voice of air traffic management worldwide. CANSO Members support almost 90 percent of world air traffic. Members share information and develop new policies, with the ultimate aim of improving air navigation services on the ground and in the air. CANSO represents its Members’ views in major regulatory and industry forums, including at ICAO, where it has official Observer status. CANSO has an extensive network of Associate Members drawn from across the aviation industry. For more, visit canso.org.

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