

## JOINT POSITION ON OPEN SKIES BY THE EUROPEAN TRAVEL COMMISSION AND ACI EUROPE

**Prague, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2015.** On the occasion of the 25th ACI EUROPE Annual Assembly, Congress and Exhibition taking place in Prague today, Arnaud Feist, President of ACI EUROPE and CEO of Brussels Airport announced the release of a joint position on Open Skies by ACI EUROPE and the European Travel Commission.

The statement underlines the need to support connectivity by expanding Open Skies beyond Europe. The priority should be about replicating the benefits achieved by the 2006 EU-US aviation agreement with the EU's main trading partners - including ASEAN, China, the Gulf countries, India and Turkey. These EU-negotiated agreements should aim at liberalising market access on international air routes for both passenger and freight services. They should also achieve regulatory convergence on key issues relating to the efficient functioning of a liberalised aviation market – including fair competition.

Mr Eduardo Santander, Executive Director of the European Travel Commission, underlined that European tourist destinations are increasingly tapping into the growing middle-classes of emerging markets with the expectation of attracting a growing number of visitors in the future. In this context, air connectivity has acquired a new strategic relevance for the European economy. EU connectivity gains have been the highest to the Middle East, reflecting the increased importance of the Gulf States as trading partners for the EU and the role played by the Gulf airlines - especially Emirates, Etihad Airways and Qatar Airways - in the growth of the EU-Middle East aviation market. This performance is also linked to the increasing role played by Gulf airlines in connecting the EU to Asia via their hubs.

Addressing the on-going public debate on the expansion of the Gulf airlines in Europe and the US, the President of ACI EUROPE said: "Open Skies and fair competition need to go hand in hand. But Europe's airports and Tourism Organisations do not regard the public financing of airport infrastructure, start-up aid for airlines and more favourable fiscal regimes as necessarily involving unfair competition – but rather as legitimate economic development policy choices, made by the Gulf States."

Mr Santander added: "Connectivity goes beyond Open Skies. The EU's new Aviation Strategy should address a range of issues, such as more liberal and tourist-friendly visa policies, enhancing airport capacity, abolishing aviation taxes, reducing regulatory driven costs and implementing the Single European Sky. In the future, the major growth in tourism arrivals will arrive from the emerging source markets located outside Europe, and a good aviation strategy will be an important prerequisite to keep Europe world's number 1 tourist destination".



**Note to editors:**

*The joint position paper of ACI EUROPE and the European Travel Commission entitled European Airports & Tourism Organisation – Together on Open Skies can be downloaded [here](#).*

*The European Travel Commission is an association of National Tourism Organisations (NTOs). It was created in 1948 to promote Europe as a tourist destination to the long-haul markets outside of Europe, originally in the USA and later in Canada, Latin America and Asia. It currently has 33 member NTOs, including 8 from outside the European Union.*

*Europe is the world's no. 1 tourist destination with 588 million international arrivals in 2014 and more than 50% of the market share of worldwide tourism.*

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*ACI EUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International, the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents over 450 airports in 44 European countries. In 2013, member airports handled 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe, welcoming over 1.7 billion passengers, 16.8 million tonnes of freight and more than 20.8 million aircraft movements.*