THE EUROCONTROL POSITION

EUROCONTROL, the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation, hosted a telephone conference on 19th April between the European Commission, several European states, air navigation service providers and technical experts.

The conference concluded that, while the initial reaction by the states was prudent and reduced risk to an absolute minimum, it was now time to move towards a harmonized European approach (set out below) that permitted flights – but only where safety was not compromised.

This conclusion was submitted to the meeting of European Transport Ministers on the afternoon of 19th April and was adopted.

Accordingly a limited No-fly zone will be established by the States concerned, based on forecasts from the Nine Volcanic Ash Advisory Centres (VAAC) around the world responsible for advising international aviation of the location and movement of clouds of volcanic ash.

EUROCONTROL will provide the data and the forecast to states every six hours. Aircraft operators will be permitted to operate outside this zone. In their decision as to whether to fly, they will be supported by shared data including advice from the scientific community (meteo, volcanic ash proliferation and so forth) including safety assessments supported by tests under the oversight of the competent safety authorities.

Member states have been asked to formally confirm their agreement. Meanwhile EUROCONTROL will start the provisional application of this approach. In addition the ICAO European and North Atlantic Office are organising a meeting to consider the effects on the North Atlantic Region.

The conference also concluded that, in time, it should be possible to move towards an approach in which full discretion is given to aircraft operators.

EUROCONTROL has as its primary objective to develop a seamless, pan-European air traffic management (ATM) system that fully copes with the growth in air traffic, while maintaining a high level of safety, reducing costs
and respecting the environment. EUROCONTROL has 38 Member States: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech, Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

On 8th October 2002, the member states and the European Community signed a Protocol on the Accession of the European Community to the revised EUROCONTROL Convention. Pending its entry into force after ratification by all Parties, certain provisions of the Protocol are already being provisionally applied.