UN officials hail climate change deal reached at Cancún conference

International Law in The United Nations climate change talks in Cancún have concluded with a package of decisions to help countries advance towards a low-emissions future, delivering what the world body’s top officials have hailed as a victory in the battle against one of today’s biggest challenges.

The outcome is an “important success for a world much in need of it,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a statement issued on Saturday, following the conclusion of the two-week meeting.

“Governments came together in common cause, for the common good, and agreed on a way forward to meet the defining challenge of our time.”

Dubbed the “Cancún Agreements,” the decisions include formalizing mitigation pledges and ensuring increased accountability for them, as well as taking concrete action to protect the world’s forests, which account for nearly one-fifth of global carbon emissions.

Delegates meeting at the 16th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) also agreed to ensure no gap between the first and second commitment periods of the Kyoto Protocol, an addition to the Convention that contains legally binding measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and whose first commitment period is due to expire in 2012.

Agreement was also reached on establishing a fund for long-term climate financing to support developing countries, and bolstering technology cooperation and enhancing vulnerable populations’ ability to adapt to the changing climate.

“The outcomes in Cancun have given us important tools. Now we must use them, and strengthen our efforts in line with the scientific imperative for action,” stated Mr. Ban.

Welcoming the agreements reached, UN climate change chief Christiana Figueres said nations have
shown that they can work together to reach consensus on a common cause.

“Cancún has done its job. The beacon of hope has been reignited and faith in the multilateral climate change process to deliver results has been restored,” said Ms. Figueres, who is the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC.

“Governments have given a clear signal that they are headed towards a low-emissions future together, they have agreed to be accountable to each other for the actions they take to get there, and they have set it out in a way which encourages countries to be more ambitious over time.”

The next Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC is scheduled to be held in South Africa from 28 November to 9 December 2011.

(Najma Laila)

Better economic prospects boosted worldwide air traffic in 2010, UN reports


Passenger and freight air traffic grew substantially in 2010 as positive economic prospects worldwide overshadowed the depressed levels of 2009 caused by the global financial crisis, according to preliminary United Nations figures.

In a report on trends compiled annually for its members, the UN International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) said the substantial growth in traffic reflects positive economic prospects worldwide – based on a forecast of a four per cent increase in the world’s real gross domestic product and that total scheduled passenger traffic, both international and domestic, measured in passenger-kilometres performed, increased by about eight per cent year over year.

Created in 1944, the ICAO promotes the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation, setting standards and regulations necessary for safety, security, efficiency and regularity, as well as for aviation environmental protection. The 190 countries that make up the organization’s membership use the report’s findings for planning purposes, in areas such as infrastructure and plane purchases.

ICAO said that the number of passengers carried in 2010 was up 6.3
per cent over 2009, at some 2.5 billion passengers, while cargo — measured in freight-tonne kilometres performed — posted a dramatic jump of 18.9 per cent after a sharp decline of 11 per cent the previous year. The jump in cargo traffic was in with a sharp rebound in global trade and its largest increase in three decades.

International passenger traffic grew by 8.8 per cent, led by a strong rebound in business and leisure long-haul travel, particularly in emerging markets such as the so-called BRIC countries – Brazil, Russia, India and China – where outgoing tourism flourished.

The largest percentage growth was registered by the airlines of the Middle East with 21 per cent, followed by those of the Asia/Pacific region with 12.9 per cent, Latin America with 11.4 per cent and Africa with 10 per cent. Traffic in the mature markets of North America and Europe grew by 6.2 per cent and 6.7 per cent, respectively. The lower growth figures relate to a larger traffic base and still represent significant increases.

Europe is still benefiting from the ability of low cost carriers to expand their point-to-point markets, due in part to the geographical enlargement of the European Union. Demand for travel remained strong and resilient despite the eruption of the Eyjafjallajokull volcano in Iceland, which partially closed European airspace in the spring, disrupting business and leisure travel and paralyzing air cargo movements.

ICAO found that more than 100,000 flights were cancelled in 2010, including 80 per cent of the intra-European market, while nine million passengers were affected.

Domestically, markets overall grew by 6.9 per cent. Rates of 1.5 per cent, 3.6 per cent and 4 per cent in North America, the Middle East and Africa respectively, were offset by rates of 15.1 per cent in the Asia/Pacific region, 15.9 per cent in Latin America and 12.2 per cent in Europe.

The recovery in cargo traffic was led by the Asia/Pacific region, with an increase of 24.8 per cent, while all regions posted double-digit growth, the highest being the Middle East at 34.1 per cent.

The two major aircraft manufacturers, Boeing of the United States and the European Airbus, are expected to have delivered more than 950 new aircraft in 2010, 40 per cent of them aimed replacing aircraft in mature markets. These energy-efficient planes will help reduce the carbon footprint of aviation on the environment and support efforts towards reversing climate.

Looking ahead, ICAO said that based on more than four per cent growth in the world economy for the next three years, it forecasts that pas-
senger traffic will increase by 4.7 per cent and 4.9 per cent in 2011 and 2012, respectively. Oil prices, currently above $80 per barrel, remain a potential impediment to growth, although this could be mitigated by the delivery of new and more fuel efficient aircraft.

(Najmu Laila)

ASEAN to Step Up Cross-Sectoral Cooperation towards MDGs

ASEAN Secretariat, 13 January 2011

http://www.aseansec.org/25743.html#Article-1

Senior officials from ASEAN’s various sectors of cooperation met Monday to identify the region’s initiatives that cut across the eight categories of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The officials also looked at ways to promote cross-sectoral linkages and coordination to address the issues that face these sectors.

The MDGs are eight internationally-recognised development goals to be achieved by 2015. The meeting is one of ASEAN’s efforts to step up coordination among relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies to help accelerate the attainment of the MDGs, many of which resonate with the purposes of ASEAN.

MDGs attainment efforts in ASEAN had before been in silo – each sector’s initiative was focused on one goal. With the meeting, the various sectors can support each other and therefore step up the attainment.

At the meeting, the senior officials were joined by the Permanent Representatives to ASEAN, representatives of the Bangkok-based ASEAN Regional Centre of Excellence on MDGs and the UNDP Asia Pacific Regional Centre, and officers from the ASEAN Secretariat.

The participants also reviewed the progress achieved in the attainment of the MDGs in each ASEAN Member States. Significant progress on issues relating to reducing child mortality rate was also noted. The meeting, in addition, underlined means to address cross-sectoral issues of climate change, climate-related disasters, food security, HIV and AIDS, and emerging infectious diseases in the region that need the attention of ASEAN in accelerating the MDGs attainment.
Chairing the meeting, the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to ASEAN, Ambassador I Gede Ngurah Swajaya, said that the meeting was essential to address issues of priority concerns to the people. Ambassador Ngurah is also the Chairman of the Committee of Permanent Representative to ASEAN. The Ambassador's statement was in line with Indonesia’s ASEAN Chairmanship priority of making ASEAN a more people-centred organisation, as stipulated in the ASEAN Charter. A timely attainment of the MDGs by all ASEAN Member States, he also said, would be in line with the goals and objectives of the ASEAN Community.

(Najmu Laila)

ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights Visits United States.
ASEAN Secretariat, 16 December 2010
http://www.ascomsec.org/73683.htm

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) made an official visit to the United States from 14 to 19 November, upon the invitation of the U.S. Department of State. The visit provided the Commission with an opportunity to exchange views on human rights issues of mutual concern and the possibilities of future cooperation with various relevant US government bodies, in addition to the United Nations agencies, international organisations and international civil society.

While in the US capital of Washington, D.C., the Commission met officials from the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission; the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; U.S. Department of State; and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). They also met representatives of civil society organisations working with the IACHR, the US academic community at the ASEAN Study Center of the American University and at the East-West Center, US-based international civil society and the US-ASEAN Business Council.

In New York City, the Commission met officials from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNIFEM, UNDP, UNICEF, ECOSOC, UNHCR, the Asia Society, Asian American Bar As-
sociation of New York and the Center for Reproductive Rights.

As an overarching human rights institution of ASEAN, the AICHR will continue to consult with other national, regional and international institutions and entities for the promotion and protection of human rights in the region.

(Najmu Laila)

ICAO Member States Agree to Historic Agreement on Aviation and Climate Change


The 37th Session of the Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which concluded today, achieved important advancements in aviation safety and aviation security assuring even greater safety performance in the already safest and most secure mode of mass transport in the world.

Reaffirming its leadership role, the meeting adopted a comprehensive resolution to reduce the impact of aviation emissions on climate change. The agreement provides a roadmap for action through 2050 for the 190 Member States of the Organization.

Solidifying its global influence, the Organization signed numerous international agreements, including cooperation agreements with regional civil aviation organizations and bodies from all regions of the world.

Climate Change

The resolution on the environment makes ICAO the first United Nations Agency to lead a sector in the establishment of a globally harmonized agreement for addressing its CO2 emissions. The resolution was adopted with some States expressing reservations and calling upon the ICAO Council to continue its work on specific aspects of the agreement.

This remarkable accomplishment comes only two months before negotiations are again undertaken by these very same States at the 16th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting scheduled for December in Mexico.

"We feel that the Assembly resolution and related decisions are good
examples of the spirit of cooperation that can make a substantial contribution to the UNFCCC discussions,” said the President of the ICAO Council, Roberto Kobeh González.

This historic agreement builds on achievements since the last ICAO Assembly in 2007, which included a global goal of 2 per cent annual fuel efficiency improvement up to the year 2050, a global framework for the development and deployment of sustainable alternative fuels for aviation, and a target of 2013 for a CO2 standard for aircraft engines.

Additional new initiatives include the development of a framework for market-based measures (MBMs), a feasibility study on the creation of a global MBM scheme and guiding principles for States to use when designing and implementing market-based measures for international aviation, all of which will be reviewed at the next Assembly in 2013.

Other features of the agreement include mechanisms for technology transfer to developing States; a requirement for States to submit to ICAO their action plans for reaching goals set by the Organization; assistance for States to meet their respective objectives; and exemptions from market-based measures for States with very low emissions due to their small traffic base.

“This agreement demonstrates what can be achieved when parties with divergent and even conflicting views are determined to progress towards results that are in the best interest of an industry as critical to the world economy as aviation,” Mr. Kobeh commented.

Safety

Addressing the reality that the majority of accidents and serious incidents resulting in fatalities occur during the take-off and landing phases of flights, the Assembly endorsed ICAO’s plan to establish a multi-disciplinary approach to address the critical issue of runway safety. This will bring together representatives from airlines, airports, air navigation service providers and regulatory authorities. In May 2012, the Organization will host a Global Runway Safety Symposium in Montréal, followed by a number of regional workshops to identify and further resolve runway safety issues.

The Assembly also endorsed a proactive safety strategy based on the sharing of critical safety information among governments and industry stakeholders. Greater availability of information in a transparent process improves the ability to better analyze and predict safety risks and to take action before issues result in accidents. Acting proactively on risk indicators can help to significantly reduce the accidents in all regions of the world.
In a demonstration of support for the strategy, ICAO signed a Memorandum of Understanding during the Assembly with the United States Department of Transportation, the European Union, and the International Air Transport Association for the creation of a Global Safety Information Exchange. ICAO will coordinate the collection, analysis and exchange of aviation safety information among Exchange Members and disseminate to the global aviation community.

The Assembly also endorsed ICAO’s plan intended to guide the estimated 50 billion dollar investment that States will make in their aviation infrastructure over the next 10 years. Through the Global Air Navigation Plan, ICAO acts as global integrator, facilitating harmonization of a variety of large scale regional programmes. Initial plans will be introduced to States at a Global Air Navigation Forum in September of 2011 and finalized in November of 2012 during the 12th Air Navigation Conference.

Security

An ICAO diplomatic conference held in Beijing, in September 2010, adopted two international air law instruments for the suppression of unlawful acts relating to civil aviation, to further criminalize the use of civil aircraft as a weapon and of dangerous materials to attack aircraft or other targets on the ground.

The Assembly built on this achievement by recognizing the need to strengthen aviation security worldwide. In a Declaration, unanimously adopted by participants, international commitment was reaffirmed to enhance aviation security collaboratively and proactively through screening technologies to detect prohibited articles, strengthening international standards, improving security information-sharing and providing capacity-building assistance to States in need.

The Assembly put its full support behind a comprehensive, new ICAO aviation security strategy. It highlights key priorities, such as identifying and preventing new forms of attack before they occur, streamlining security checks so that they remain effective but are not duplicated unnecessarily, and improving the capabilities of States to oversee aviation security.

Regional assistance and cooperation

On the eve of the Assembly, ICAO concluded Memoranda of Cooperation with two regional organizations—the African Union and the European Union—and four regional civil aviation bodies—the Arab Civil Aviation Commission, the African Civil Aviation Commission, the European
Civil Aviation Conference and the Latin American Civil Aviation Commission. The objective is to help reduce aircraft accident rates, improve security in flight and at airports, and promote the overall sustainable development of the air transport industry.

In the course of the meeting, 49 States enhanced their relationship with ICAO by working through the Technical Cooperation Bureau for expanding existing agreements, negotiating new agreements and identifying agreements for further development.

Record attendance

The ICAO Assembly was attended by a record 1588 participants from 176 Member States and 40 international organizations involved in civil aviation.

A specialized agency of the United Nations, ICAO was created in 1944 to promote the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation throughout the world. It sets standards and regulations necessary for aviation safety, security, efficiency and regularity, as well as for aviation environmental protection. The Organization serves as the forum for cooperation in all fields of civil aviation among its 190 Contracting States.

(Najimu Laila)

ICAO Strengthens Air Cargo Security Measures

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has adopted more stringent air cargo security standards, as part of its ongoing efforts to enhance the overall security of air transport operations worldwide.

The new measures emphasize more extensive screening of cargo, mail and other goods prior to placing them on board aircraft and better protection of aviation security, in a proactive and concerted manner,” said Mr. Roberto Kobeh González, ICAO Council President.

The recent 37th Session of the ICAO Assembly unanimously adopted a Declaration which identified a number of areas where States committed to working together, in cooperation with the industry, on security issues.

Volume 8 Number 2 January 2011
tion from unauthorized interference from the point where security controls are applied until departure of the aircraft.

Also included is the strengthening of provisions related to the deployment of security equipment, the security of air traffic service providers, training programmes and instructor certification systems, and cyber threats.

The updated security requirements are contained in the 12th revision of Annex 17 (Security) to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, adopted today by the Council of the Organization.

"This latest revision to the Security Annex has been in development for some time and reflects our determination to constantly review and adapt ICAO security standards to address a rapidly evolving security situation. It also complements a number of recent initiatives to significantly increase the

These include air cargo security, screening technologies to detect prohibited articles, strengthening international standards, improving security information-sharing and providing capacity-building assistance to States in need.

A diplomatic conference, held in Beijing in September 2010 under the auspices of ICAO, adopted two international air law instruments for the suppression of unlawful acts relating to civil aviation.

The two treaties further criminalize the act of using civil aircraft as a weapon, and of using dangerous materials to attack aircraft or other targets on the ground. They also provide for the unlawful transport of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons, and their related material, to be punishable. Making a threat against civil aviation may also trigger criminal liability.

(Najmu Laila)

Agreement on Regional Cooperation to Promote Efficiency and Sustainability of Air Transport


ICAO today concluded agreements with two regional organizations and four regional civil aviation bodies to cooperate in reducing the rate of aircraft accidents, improving security in flight and at airports, and promoting
the overall sustainable development of
the air transport industry.

Memoranda of Cooperation
(MOCs) were concluded with the Af-
rican Union, the European Union, the
Arab Civil Aviation Commission, the
African Civil Aviation Commission, the
European Civil Aviation Conference
and the Latin American Civil Aviation
Commission.

The MOCs create a framework
for greater regional cooperation in the
technical and policy aspects of inter-
national civil aviation. They emphasize
the consistent implementation and har-
monization of ICAO’s internationally-
recognized Standards and Recom-

dended Practices (SARPs) related to
aviation safety and security, environ-
mental protection, as well as policies
for sustainable air transport.

The process includes: improved
mechanisms for consultation and co-
operation, including electronic informa-
tion sharing; coordinated programme
planning and implementation between
ICAO and the regional civil aviation
bodies; and joint training and capacity
building.

“Greater regional cooperation can
improve the efficiency of air transport
operations and simultaneously gener-
ate economic growth for States and
Regions alike,” said Roberto Kobeh
González, President of the ICAO
Council.

“In a world increasingly structured
around regional or sub regional eco-
nomic units, greater collaboration in
aviation matters can facilitate access to
essential markets which could other-
wise not be easily reached. Close part-
nerships between ICAO and regional
bodies can make this happen,” he con-
cluded.

A specialized agency of the United
Nations, ICAO was created in 1944
to promote the safe and orderly de-
velopment of international civil aviation
throughout the world. It sets standards
and regulations necessary for aviation
safety, security, efficiency and regular-
ity, as well as for aviation environmen-
tal protection. The Organization serves
as the forum for cooperation in all fields
of civil aviation among its 190 Con-
tracting States.

(Najma Laila)
Tunisia: UN Experts Urge End to Use of Excessive Force against Protesters


14 January 2011 – A group of independent United Nations human rights experts today urged the Tunisian Government to control the use of force against peaceful demonstrators, after 21 deaths were officially confirmed over a two-day period between 8 and 9 January.

The call echoes the one made by UN human rights chief Navi Pillay on Wednesday amid the ongoing street protests in the North African country by civilians reportedly angered by rising prices of essential commodities, lack of employment opportunities, alleged corruption and limitations on fundamental rights and freedoms.

According to a news release issued today by the UN human rights office in Geneva, credible rights groups have reported “a much higher number of killings” than 21 since the beginning of the protests in mid-December.

The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns, warned that “the killing of innocent civilians is a clear violation of international law and is totally unacceptable in any society.”

While the statement made by the country’s President yesterday that security forces should not use live ammunition against demonstrators is an important step, these words must become reality, the experts stated.

“Excessive use of force against demonstrators must end,” they stressed, adding they were “deeply shocked” by the excessive use of force, despite the largely peaceful nature of the demonstrations.

El Hadji Malick Sow, Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, called for “an immediate cessation of all arbitrary arrests” and urged the Government to follow through with its commitment to release all the persons arrested who have peacefully taken part in the demonstrations.”

The experts expressed particular concern that “journalists, bloggers, political activists and human rights defenders denouncing human rights violations in the country and advocating, in particular, for freedom of expression have been the subject of widespread arrest, intimidation and torture.”

They also suggested the establishment of a special commission to con-
duct transparent, independent and prompt investigations into the violence and killings.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) said today that it is willing to support any investigation into what has happened in Tunisia.

Also adding their voices to today's call are the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Frank La Rue the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekaggya and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Juan Méndez.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, for his part, said he is closely monitoring events in Tunisia and called for full respect for freedom of expression and association.

In a statement released by his spokesperson, Mr. Ban urged all concerned parties to seek to resolve issues peacefully and lawfully with the aim of addressing grievances and work towards a democratic outcome that responds to the aspirations of the Tunisian people.

(Najmu Laila)

Istanbul Forum Offers Chance to Recommit to Helping World’s Poorest Nations – UN Envoy


The forthcoming conference on the world’s least developed countries provides an opportunity for the international community to recommit to helping these vulnerable States achieve economic growth and social development, a senior United Nations official said today.

The Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) is due to take place in Istanbul, Turkey, from 9 to 13 May to assess the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action – the outcome document adopted at the 2001 LDC conference – and to reach agreement on a new generation of international support measures for the 48 States.

Cheick Sidi Diarra, the UN High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, told a news conference in New York that consultations
with LDCs and their development partners have resulted in the identification of some priority measures for continued support.

They include strengthening infrastructure and access to technology; improving domestic resource mobilisation; consistent official development assistance with a special focus on job creation and poverty reduction; and improving food production through investment in agriculture.

Other important strategies that would help the LDCs achieve their development targets include enhancing their capacity to attract foreign direct investment, and supporting their efforts to gain greater access to markets.

Mr. Diarra was speaking on the sidelines of the first preparatory session for the Istanbul conference, which is meeting at UN Headquarters for four days to discuss the new challenges and the priorities that the gathering in May will consider.

According to Mr. Diarra’s office, progress since 2001 among the world’s poorest nations has been mixed. Some countries have performed better than others, but overall, economic growth has not always translated into reduced levels of poverty.

Over the past three decades, only Botswana, Cape Verde and Maldives have “graduated” from the category of LDCs.

(Netra Laila)

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**Andrus: New agreement sets up Idaho to become nuclear waste site**

[http://www.idahostatesman.com](http://www.idahostatesman.com)

Former Democratic Gov. Cecil Andrus said he’s troubled by a new deal that would allow even small amounts of nuclear waste to be shipped to eastern Idaho.

Andrus was instrumental in negotiating an agreement in 1995 with the federal government to limit nuclear waste shipments coming into the state for any reason.

In a Jan. 11 letter obtained by the Idaho Statesman, Andrus raises questions with Gov. C.L. “Butch” Otter about a new agreement that clears shipments of small amounts of waste to the Idaho National Laboratory for research.

The new agreement essentially...
makes Idaho a final destination for nuclear waste, Andrus said.

"The good news is the Department of Energy has found a place to store nuclear waste," Andrus said. "The bad news is it's between Idaho Falls and Arco."

Otter, a Republican, said the 880 pounds of used fuel coming to the lab annually under the new agreement was being used for research and will count toward existing limits set in the state's 1995 nuclear waste agreement with the federal government.

That agreement requires the federal government to remove all 300 tons of spent fuel at the lab by 2035, or pay the state $60,000 a day if it fails to do so.

"What this agreement does is simply set forth the process by which spent commercial fuel research can occur, recognizing and adhering to all of the limits and deadlines of the 1995 agreement," said Jon Hanian, Otter's spokesman.

Andrus, however, said the change, combined with the federal decision not to store nuclear waste at the Yucca Mountain site in Nevada, means Idaho will end up storing more nuclear waste.

In his letter, Andrus said he also finds it troubling the state is willing to get tough with the federal government on wolves and health care reform but has decided not to take a stand on allowing new sources of nuclear waste to come to the state.

Andrus teamed with former Republican Idaho Gov. Phil Batt to forge the original agreement limiting nuclear waste shipments to Idaho, fearing radioactive and toxic Cold War garbage shipped to the 890-square-mile nuclear reservation from sites including the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant near Golden, Colo., would spread to the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer and eventually the Snake River.

Batt supports the new agreement made by Otter.

"I think it's a good deal for Idaho and a good deal for the nation," Batt said. "We are a part of the United States and should be working together to achieve energy independence. This is not a partisan issue."

Andrus said the old agreement allowed small amounts of nuclear waste for research into Idaho with a deadline for it to be removed.

John Grossenbacher, Idaho National Laboratory director, said the procedure was expensive and made long-term research programs difficult to set up — problems eliminated with the new agreement.

"The agreement gives us much more flexibility," said Grossenbacher. "We can do our job much more effectively."
Energy Department spokesman Brad Bugger said the agency has spent more than $700 million to upgrade the Idaho National Laboratory since 2005. He said the number of jobs at the lab have increased from 3,300 in 2005 to 4,075.

(Najma Laila)