

Brussels, 18 June 2010

Commission and US agree to cooperate on civil aviation research and development

The European Commission and the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have officially concluded negotiations for the establishment of a Memorandum of cooperation in civil aviation research and development. The two delegations, led by Hank Krakowski, FAA Chief Operating Officer, and Daniel Calleja, European Commission's Director of Air Transport, met in Madrid today, hosted by the EU Spanish Presidency, [in the presence of Spain's Transport Minister Jose Blanco]. The negotiating parties initialled the Memorandum and a first technical Annex promoting interoperability between their respective air traffic management (ATM) modernisation programmes: SESAR and NextGen.

The Memorandum will enable the EU and the US to jointly pursue their common objective to develop and deploy greener and more efficient air transport systems through a legally binding cooperation framework, based on commonly agreed reciprocity principles. Under the Memorandum the two parties will be able to address through cooperative activities any research and development issues in civil aviation such as: safety, security, environment, performance, alternative fuels, aircraft design, Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), sub-orbital airplanes, satellite-based communications and related ATM applications, etc.

The simultaneous agreement on the first technical Annex of the Memorandum dedicated to SESAR-NextGen cooperation constitutes a major achievement for ensuring effective interoperability of the two ATM systems. For the EU side, the activities launched under this Annex will be carried out by the SESAR Joint Undertaking ensuring an optimal coordination of European ATM modernisation activities and the direct involvement of EU aviation industry.

In accordance with the agreed reciprocity principles, the parties undertake to identify the opportunities available to interested parties to participate in consultative fora of each party's ATM modernisation program and opportunities to each other's industry stakeholders to contribute to programs of equivalent research and development activities. Furthermore, through this agreement, the EU and the US will coordinate their technical efforts in support of global standardisation of ATM systems through the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). Interoperability between SESAR and NextGen is in fact essential for airspace users - airlines in particular - as it will enable aircraft to fly in the US and in the EU airspaces with the same equipment to navigate, communicate and report its position, avoiding additional costs and weights.

The parties already envisage to develop in the very near future additional Annexes, namely in the fields of aviation safety (for example addressing the impact of volcanic ash clouds) and of use of alternative fuels in aviation. The rapid implementation of the Annex will provide a substantial contribution to the effective deployment of SESAR and consequently to accelerating the implementation of the Single European Sky.

The Commission will now propose the text for formal adoption then present it to the Council and the European Parliament for approval of its signature, in view of its entry into force in early 2011.