

Aviation sector to vote on climate change plan

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Civil aviation officials poised to vote on a proposal that would have airlines buy credits to offset rising carbon emissions in the sector

Civil aviation officials were expected to endorse a proposal that would have airlines buy credits to offset rising carbon emissions in the sector, at a 10-day meeting that opens in Montreal Tuesday.

The 191 member nations of the International Civil Aviation

Organization (ICAO) were scheduled to vote on this and other proposals at their triennial meeting.

Delegates are tackling the environment—one of a wide range of topics on the agenda—at the same time that their countries are ratifying last year's Paris climate agreement.

Although the aviation sector was exempted in the December 2015 accord on reducing [greenhouse gas emissions](#) linked to global warming, aviation officials are mindful of the need to curb the sector's growing CO2 emissions, according to a diplomat.

At the ICAO general assembly, member states are to vote on a climate scheme designed and refined through intense negotiations over the last six years, called the Carbon Offset and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA).

Its goal is to cap airline CO2 emissions by 2035 at 2019 or 2020 levels.

This would be the "first global agreement on capping a single sector's climate impact," according to the Air Transport Action Group (ATAG), which represents airlines, airports, and airplane manufacturers.

Its target for reducing emissions is ambitious given that the number of flights worldwide are forecast to increase significantly over the coming decades.

But ICAO believes it can be reached through the purchase of credits to offset the sector's CO2 emissions, route optimization, and greater use of more fuel-efficient engines and lighter aircraft materials.



A Boeing 747 belonging to French company Air France is refueled at the Roissy airport, near Paris on July 20, 2006

The use of biofuels in aircraft would also have a tremendous impact. "If commercial aviation replaced six percent of the fuel it uses with alternative fuels, they would reduce their carbon footprint by five percent," ATAG said.

The timeline starts with a voluntary first phase in 2021 and full rollout in 2027.

But proponents say a stepped approach is necessary in order to evaluate the scheme's effectiveness.

So far, 58 countries, including all European nations, the United States, China, Japan, Canada and the United Arab Emirates, have signed up for

the first phase.

In 2022, the first "pilot" phase will be reviewed to determine its effectiveness, and any tweaks to the program will be applied before proceeding to the next phase.

In the next phase, which runs from 2024 to 2026 and is also voluntary, participating airlines will trade carbon credits with competitors flying the same routes.

For example, a French or German airline will be able to trade [carbon credits](#) for flights to Canada or Japan with Canadian or Japanese firms, but not with airlines from countries not participating in this phase of the scheme.

Finally, between 2027 and 2035, the program will be expanded to include nearly all nations, with exceptions made for the least developed countries, small island states and countries with a small volume of international air travel.

At the meeting, the ICAO will also decide on binding new aircraft standards for models launched after 2020.

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