



26 June 2020

Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano, Council President
Council Members

International Civil Aviation Organization, 999 Robert-Bourassa Boulevard, Montréal, Québec H3C 5H7, Canada

Dear President Sciacchitano and Council Members:

COVID-19 has inflicted tremendous pain and loss on families and communities the world over. And it has caused extreme hardship for the aviation sector. The path to recovery is uncertain and the shape of recovery will not be known for many months.

Our organizations, which have participated in ICAO processes for the past decade or more, wish to underscore that while you confront the COVID crisis, you must also confront the climate crisis. That is why you should resist calls to re-write the CORSIA baseline at this time.

When IATA put forward its goal of “carbon neutral growth from 2020,” it asked the Assembly to give it a market-based measure – and the Assembly did so. When experts warned that this measure should use a historical base year, rather than a future base year which could turn out to be atypical, the industry asked the Assembly to set CORSIA’s baseline at the average of 2019-2020 emissions – and it did so.

When COVID hit, the industry asked governments to provide tens of billions of taxpayer dollars – and governments did so. Now IATA wants more. It is asking you to suspend CORSIA’s offset obligations. We urge you not to do so.

We acknowledge this is a time of need for the industry. You can help by inviting States to use the flexibility that the Assembly built into CORSIA. That provision lets airlines calculate their offset obligations using their 2020 emissions in lieu of their “given year” emissions, greatly reducing their offset obligations in the Pilot Phase, which is their time of need. But rushing to re-write the baseline – a shift that will reverberate through CORSIA’s 15 years – would be ill-advised.

Public confidence in the aviation sector is at an all-time low. If aviation is to rebuild, then for the sake of future generations, it must do so on a path to net zero emissions by 2050. Forward-looking companies will lean into this challenge. ICAO can play a key role. The flexibility built into CORSIA can help airlines now. The full Assembly can consider at its 2022 review how COVID-19 has affected air traffic, taking into account the shape and pace of recovery and the growing understanding of aviation’s role in climate change. Simply postponing CORSIA obligations – which is the likely effect if you re-write the baseline – would send the opposite signal. Taking such a decision in the midst of the crisis, behind closed doors, while taxpayers are paying for airline’s rescue packages, will feel like a betrayal to the public and will destroy confidence in ICAO’s ability to lead. Finally, it will increase the pressure on national and regional authorities to hold aviation to more stringent targets to meet the climate crisis, dealing a further blow to multilateralism.

We urge you not to change CORSIA’s baseline.

About ICSA: The International Coalition for Sustainable Aviation (ICSA) works to reduce pollution from air travel. As a network of nonprofit organizations representing millions of members, ICSA is the only environmental civil society group accredited as an observer by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the United Nations standard-setting body for international air travel. ICSA member organizations include Aviation Environment Federation, Carbon Market Watch, Environmental Defense Fund, the International Council on Clean Transportation, Transport & Environment, and WWF. For more information, please visit www.icsa-aviation.org