



الاتحاد العربي للنقل الجوي  
ARAB AIR CARRIERS ORGANIZATION

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**Press Release - AACO 41st Annual General Meeting**  
22/10/2008

AACO Annual General Meeting held three working sessions on 22 October 2008 at "Karthago Le Palace" hotel in Tunisia, under the presidency of Eng. Nabil Chettaoui, AACO President for this year and Chairman and President of Tunis Air.

Eng. Chettaoui, AACO President and H.E. Eng. Khalid Abdullah Almolhem, AACO Executive Committee Chairman, and Mr. Abdul Wahab Teffaha, AACO Secretary General presented 'The AACO Shield' to H.E. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia, in recognition of his continuous support to the development of civil aviation and international air transport in general and the Arab and national Tunisian air transport in particular, and for his esteemed patronage of the 41st Annual General meeting of AACO held, H.E. the Prime Minister received the Shield on behalf of H.E. the President during their visit to his headquarters.

At the beginning of the first working session, AACO paid a special tribute in memoriam to the late Mr. Ziad Al-Haremi, Former CEO of Oman Air, who passed away this year after long years of service, supporting the air transport industry through his work at Gulf Air and then Oman Air, whereby AACO presented a symbolic gift to Mr. Al-Haremi's son, Mr. Tareq Al-Haremi. Also, AACO presented a memento to Eng. Atef Abdel Hamid, Former Chairman of EgyptAir Holding Company and former Chairman and member of AACO Executive Committee; in addition to a memento to Eng. Nachaat Numir, Former Chairman - Managing Director of Syrian Arab Airlines, and former AACO President and member of its Executive Committee.

AACO Secretary General then presented his report on industry issues, focusing on the current global financial and economic crisis and its impact on the Arab air transport industry. The secretary general emphasized that as much as the crisis puts pressure on air transport industry, as much as it presents opportunities to the Arab airlines to emerge from this crisis stronger and more developed than before. Mr. Teffaha also concentrated in his speech on developing AACO's mechanisms and enhancing cooperation amongst Arab airlines, and the role of the governments in supporting the air transport industry due to its important contribution in the development of the Arab national economy. Some of the moves the secretary general called for the Arab governments to implement are: the necessity of optimizing air routes that contributes to reducing fuel consumption, which reflects positively on the airlines' costs on one hand, and more on reducing gas emissions that affect the environment on the other.

Moreover, AACO secretary general called for the Arab governments to genuinely review their taxes and charges policies that are imposed on air transport activities and related activities, in order to revitalize traffic and reduce the impact of the crisis on the air transport industry. This same step, if implemented by the governments, would also contribute in reducing the price of the tickets which will reflect positively on promoting travel, and consequently generating more economic benefits which would surpass the financial returns of taxes and charges.

The Annual General Meeting adopted a resolution about the current global economic crisis confirming its support to the above steps, in addition to the speedy implementation of the Arab Multilateral Agreement to Liberalize Air Transport (The Damascus Convention of 2004). A copy of the resolution is attached to this press release.

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Following AACO secretary general speech, the AGM listened to a keynote address by Mr. Giovanni Bisignani, IATA Director General, who focused on the need for a continued support to the process of liberalizing air transport especially in the current crisis. Also, Mr. Zoltan Kazatsay/ Deputy Director General, DG TREN, European Commission presented a speech on the Arab – European Aviation Relations.

A closed session for AACO member airlines was held following the first working session. This closed session witnessed the signature of two agreements; between AACO and IATA on training and some automated systems, and between AACO and Kenyon on providing Emergency Response Services for AACO member airlines. Then, H.E. Eng. Khalid Abdullah Almolhem, Director General of Saudi Arabian Airlines and the Chairman of AACO Executive Committee, presented a report on AACO Executive Committee's work in directing AACO's work.

The AGM held also its third working session comprising a panel discussion moderated by Mr. Mark Pilling, Chief Editor of Airline Business Magazine, gathering H.E. Abdul Aziz Al Noaimi, Chairman of the Executive Council of the Arab Civil Aviation Commission & Chairman of Qatar Civil Aviation Authority; H.E. Eng. Khalid Abdullah Almolhem, Director General of Saudi Arabian Airlines; Mr. Tim Clark, President of Emirates Airlines; and Mr. Carlos Mestre-Zamarreo, Chief Negotiator – Aviation Agreements – European Commission. The debate focused on the future of Arab air transport and its opportunities and challenges especially within the current global economic crisis.

Furthermore, AACO AGM elected H.E. Eng. Khalid Abdullah Almolhem as AACO's President for the 42nd session of AACO, noting that AACO 42nd AGM will be held in Jeddah in autumn 2009. -- At the end of the AGM, AACO member airlines thanked AACO's President, Eng. Nabil Chettaoui, for his performance during the past year, and for his efficient presidency of the 41st Annual General meeting and for Tunisair's generous hospitality for all the delegates present at the AGM. It's worth mentioning that this AGM was attended by CEOs and chairmen of all AACO member carriers except for Palestinian Airlines whose chairman wasn't able to attend due to the blockade on Palestine. Also, among the attendance were IATA Director General and the President of the Executive Council of the Arab Civil Aviation Commission and the moderator of the joint aviation forum and the President Emeritus of ICAO, Dr. Assad Kotaite. Moreover, the CEO of Malaysian Airlines and the Chief Executive Officer of SITA, Mr. Francesco Violante, and the Chairman of Amadeus, Mr. Jose Antonio Tazon attended the AGM in addition to presidents & representatives from more than 50 companies specialized in aviation and partners with AACO.

The AGM was concluded with a special ceremony on the occasion of the 60th year of the establishment of Tunis Air. The ceremony was attended by all the invitees to the AGM in addition to top key personalities. AACO Secretary General and IATA Director General presented each a memento to Eng. Nabil Chettaoui, wishing Tunis Air further progress and prosperity.

#### **Resolution on the Global Financial and Economic Crisis**

After the AGM reviewed the current global financial and economic crisis and its impact on the air transport industry, and given that the air transport industry will be facing significant challenges because of this crisis when the industry has barely emerged from a protracted crisis between 2001 and 2006, and based on the vision of the AGM for the role that the air transport industry plays in economic development especially in developing countries, including Arab countries, and based on the need to maintain the industry's abilities to continue its growth and its contribution in revitalizing the economic development in Arab countries, **the AGM resolves that:**

**First,** To strengthen the cooperation amongst AACO member airlines, and direct the Secretary General to formulate a vision for the mechanisms of this cooperation and to revert to the AGM, through AACO Executive Committee, with specific suggestions in this regard.

**Second,** To call upon the governments to genuinely look into the optimization of air routes by making them more direct which would reduce fuel consumption and consequently limit the negative effect on the environment. The AGM also directs the Secretary General to

coordinate with ACAC, IATA and ICAO in this regard.

**Third,** To call upon the governments to revisit their policies on taxes and charges imposed on air transport and its related activities and to call also upon governments to provide control tools on airports which their business model were changed into a commercial one or the ones that were privatized in a way not to impose high charges on operators or charges that are out of scope from ICAO's principles. The AGM also directs the Secretary General to coordinate with ACAC, IATA and ICAO in this regard.

**Fourth,** To call upon the Arab countries to facilitate the movement of people and goods and facilitate market access on the basis of the Damascus Convention, which includes certain caveats that would prevent capacity dumping, predatory pricing, and operational financial government subsidy.

**Fifth,** To call upon the Arab Civil Aviation Commission (ACAC) in coordination with the Arab League, especially the Economic and Social Council, to look into permitting cross-border equity stake-holding of the Arab airlines that could pave the way, at a later stage, to adopting the right of establishment similar to what the European Union has established to facilitate reaching a single Arab air transport market.

**Sixth,** To discuss these issues in the joint meeting between AACO and ACAC during the Arab Aviation Summit, and to reach a mechanism to follow up on the steps that would be jointly agreed during that meeting.

Source: Arab Air Carriers Organization

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