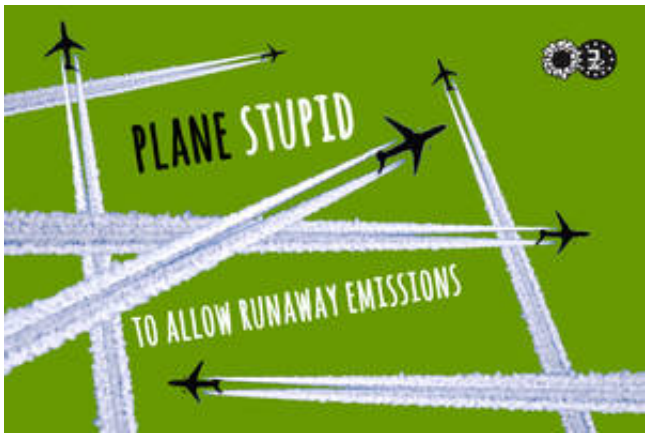
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News | 11.05.2016

The clock is ticking - it's time for aviation to take action on emissions



The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) meets this week in Montreal to discuss how the sector will respond to climate change. ICAO is the UN specialised agency responsible for regulating aviation and is currently working on an agreement to tackle the industry's runaway carbon emissions. The EU has given ICAO a deadline of the end of the year to come to a deal, or it will press ahead with its own plans. So what exactly is at stake, and why are so many worried that it will fall short of what's needed?
Why do we need to tackle aviation emissions? Aviation is one of the fastest growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions and the most climate-intensive form of transport. To give a sense of the scale of the problem, if global aviation was a country, its emissions would be ranked 7th, between Germany and South Korea! Last year's Paris Agreement included a commitment to limit the increase in global temperature to well below 2 degrees and pursue a 1.5 degree limit. With emissions from aviation forecast to continue to increase rapidly, it's clear that the Paris deal can only be honoured if we see bold action. So how has the sector responded? Well, it's fair to say the sector has been sluggish in its response to the climate challenge. Way back in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol handed the responsibility of limiting and reducing international aviation emissions to ICAO. However, in the almost two decades since then, they have failed to implement a single meaningful measure to limit international aviation emissions. Not only have they been slow, they've also been far from transparent, and have attempted in the past to block MEPs from attending their meetings. **"Stop the clock"** In 2008, after years of waiting for ICAO to take action, the EU took matters into its own hands and decided to include emissions from international aviation in its own emissions trading system, the EU ETS. This sparked a backlash from the US, China, India and others, as well as industry, who all argued that measures should be agreed and implemented globally. As a compromise, the EU agreed to only include flights between EU airports in the ETS until 2017. By "stopping the clock" on the inclusion of global aviation, the EU gave ICAO time to develop a global

market-based measure for approval at its triennial assembly in October 2016. **So what do we know about the ICAO plans?** Well, their headline target is a carbon neutral growth as of 2020, which allows the sector to grow as long as its carbon footprint doesn't increase. That's nowhere near bold enough to make what was agreed in Paris a reality. All sectors need to cut their emissions. The draft proposal also includes a large number of exemptions for poorer countries which are not being compensated for by additional action from wealthier nations. As a result, the current plans would see ICAO fail to meet even its own weak target. ICAO should make absolutely clear that carbon neutral growth is merely a first step. As a bare minimum, the deal should include a "ratcheting up" mechanism whereby periodic reviews could increase cuts to emissions until we are on target to meet the Paris Agreement. However, this is notably absent from the current proposals. To make matters worse, major airlines including British Airways and Iberia are lobbying to forbid any measures at a regional level once the ICAO scheme is in place. The reality of such a proposal would be that the EU could not continue to reduce emissions from internal EU flights through its own trading system (EU ETS). As the EU scheme is much stricter than what ICAO has on the table, this would be a major step backwards, completely undermining any progress the EU has made to date. The big question at the end of the year will be this – is the deal strong enough for the European Parliament to accept it as replacement for including international flights under EU ETS? With ICAO still dragging its heels, our MEPs will be pushing hard for a deal that honours what was agreed in Paris, and ensures that aviation does its fair share in tackling climate change.

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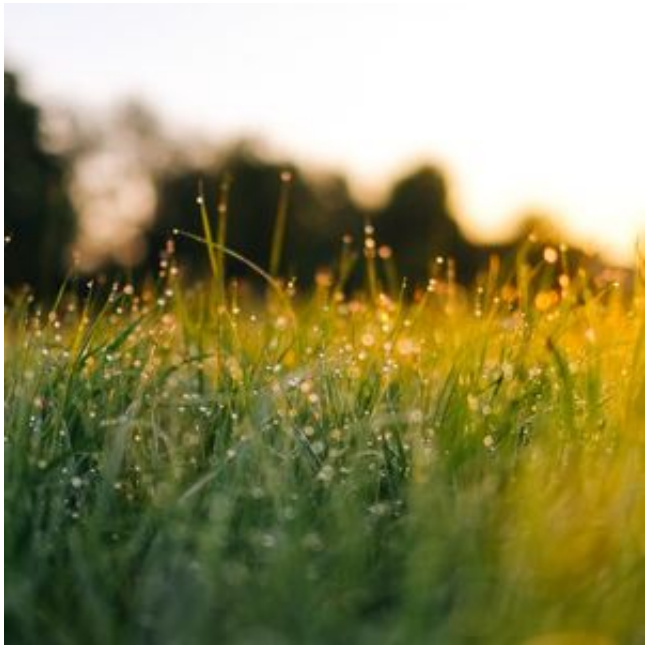
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