

Commission updates the list of airlines banned from European airspace

The European Commission adopted yesterday evening the eleventh update of the Community's list of airlines banned in the European Union which comprises those of two additional countries. With this update the ban imposed upon five airlines is lifted given satisfactory improvements in safety.

"We cannot afford any compromises in air safety, we have to remain vigilant; citizens have the right to fly safely every where in the world" said Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani and concluded that "we will not accept that airlines fly at different standards when they operate inside and outside Europe – it is high time that the international community rethinks its safety policy; those airlines which are unsafe should not be allowed to fly anywhere. This list has greatly contributed to making Europe's skies safer. We should gradually move towards an international strategy based on cooperation between countries around the world".

The new list replaces the previous one and can already be consulted on the Commission's website (<http://ec.europa.eu/transport/air-ban/>).

The key conclusions to be drawn from this latest update of the list are twofold: a) the list acts a strong incentive to remedy safety deficiencies; withdrawal from the list is indeed possible, when the parties concerned put effectively in place sound corrective action to comply with all relevant safety standards; b) the concept of a Community list is increasingly proving to serve as a preventive rather than punitive instrument for safeguarding aviation safety. This is illustrated by the numerous instances where the Community has successfully addressed potential safety threats well ahead of resorting to the drastic measure of imposing restrictions.

Significant improvements and accomplishments of the Indonesian civil aviation authority are recognised in the area of safety. Since the imposition of the ban in July 2007, four air carriers – Garuda Indonesia, Airfast Indonesia, Mandala Airlines and Premiair can be taken off the list, because their authority ensures that they respect the international safety standards. The Thai carrier One Two Go has been removed from the list as its certificate has been revoked by the Thai aviation authorities. Progress made by the civil aviation authority of Angola and the air carrier TAAG Angola Airlines to resolve progressively any safety deficiencies are recognised. In that context, the cooperation and assistance agreement signed between the civil aviation authorities of Angola and of Portugal allowed the airline to operate again into Portugal only with certain aircraft and under very strict conditions.

This update also highlights the continuous dialogue with certain States regarding the safety of their carriers. In this respect, following evidence of improvements in the safety standards, the performance of various Russian air carriers on which the Russian authorities have imposed operating restrictions will be closely monitored.

It also acknowledges the efforts made by the civil aviation authorities of Indonesia, Gabon, Ukraine and Angola to enhance the exercise of their oversight responsibilities with a view to improving safety and cooperate closely to that end with the Commission.

Safety deficiencies identified in the system of oversight by the aviation authorities of Zambia and Kazakhstan, led to an operating ban on all carriers from these two countries, with the exception of the Kazakh air carrier Air Astana, whose operations into the Community are frozen under strict restrictions.

Nonetheless, all carriers covered by this and previous updates continue to be subject to prioritised ramp inspections at Community airports in order to ensure their consistent adherence to the relevant safety standards.

Hence, today, the Community's list has 9 individual carriers whose operations are fully banned in the European Union – Air Koryo from the Democratic People Republic of Korea (DPRK), Air West from Sudan, Ariana Afghan Airlines from Afghanistan, Siem reap Airways International from Cambodia, Silverback Cargo Freighters from Rwanda, Motor Sich, Ukraine Cargo Airways, Ukrainian Mediterranean Airlines and Volare from Ukraine; all carriers (246) from 12 countries - Angola, Benin, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, (with the exception of three carriers which operate under restrictions and conditions), Indonesia (with the exception of the four carriers removed from the list), Kazakhstan (with the exception of one carrier which operates under restrictions and conditions), the Kyrgyz Republic, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Swaziland and Zambia; 7 air carriers which are allowed to operate under restrictions and conditions - TAAG Angola Airlines, Air Astana from Kazakhstan, Gabon Airlines, Afrijet and SN2AG from Gabon, Air Bangladesh and Air Service Comores.

The safety audits of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) constitute a pillar and one of the common criteria which are used to impose an operating ban. Enhancing the cooperation in this area with ICAO is therefore essential. This was the key subject at a meeting on 9 July between Vice President Tajani and the President of ICAO's Council, Mr. Kobeh. A report later this year on the functioning of the rules will also contain proposals to strengthen the international dimension.