

Air transport sector aiming at carbon-neutral growth

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The air transport industry is now working towards carbon-neutral growth despite the rise in traffic, the Air Transport Action Group has said.

"No increase in carbon emissions in spite of traffic growth is the first step towards a carbon-free future," the Air Transport Action Group said in a note presented at Sky Blue – Arab Aviation Summit yesterday.

Qatar Airways CEO Akbar Al-Baker speaks at a session on Beyond Kyoto-aviation agenda for Copenhagen 2009 at the Summit yesterday.

"Aviation is responsibly reducing its environmental impact. Aircraft entering today's fleet are 70% more fuel-efficient than 40 years ago consuming 3.5 litres per passenger per 100km. The Airbus A380s and the Boeing 787s consume less than 3lts per 100km and compare favourably with small family cars," it said.

The air transport's contribution to climate change is only 2% of man-made carbon dioxide emissions and this could reach 3% by 2050, according to updated figures from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). This evolution is based on a growth in aviation CO₂ emissions of 2% to 3% every year, with an annual traffic growth of 5%.

In 2008, the commercial aviation industry produced 677mn tonnes of carbon dioxide. This is about 2% of the total man-made CO₂ emissions of more than 34bn tonnes.

While this amount is small compared with other industry sectors such as power generation and ground transport, these industries have viable alternative energy sources currently available.

For example, the power generation industry can look to wind, hydro, nuclear and solar technologies to make electricity without producing much CO₂. Cars and buses can run on hybrid, flexible fuel engines or electricity. Electric-powered trains can replace diesel locomotives.

"The aviation industry has identified the development of biofuels as one of the major ways it can reduce its greenhouse emissions. Biofuels provide aviation with the capability to partially, and perhaps one day, fully replace carbon-intensive petroleum fuels. They will, over time, enable the industry to reduce its carbon footprint significantly," the Air Transport Action Group said.

The air transport moves in excess of 2.2bn passengers annually. The air transport industry generates about 32mn jobs annually.

Aviation's global economic impact is estimated at \$3,560bn, which is the equivalent of 7.5% of the world's gross domestic product.

"The ability to fly conveniently and efficiently between nations has been a catalyst for the global economy and has shrunk cultural barriers like no other transport sector. Aviation provides the only rapid worldwide transportation network, is indispensable for tourism and facilitates world trade," the Air Transport Action Group said.

(Gulf Times)