

Presentation by Ing. Pedro Suarez Reyes from the Ministry of Transport (Cuba) on "Air Transport in the Caribbean Region: A Cuban Perspective."

PRESENTATION TO THE 25th MEETING ON AIR TRANSPORT

Air Transport Agreement:

Thirteen countries have signed the multilateral Air Transport Agreement of the ACS, which provides greater flexibility in the area of air transport rights among the signatory countries, helping markets to be more attractive and allowing airlines to attain sufficient profits to establish their routes, thereby allowing for ever-increasing connection among countries.

In the current context, Cuba's strategies and objectives include the diversification of its present air routes, in order to continue developing multi-destinations within Cuba and in the Caribbean, in addition to an increased presence of Cubana de Aviación in markets where it has no operations, through the signing of commercial agreements (code-share and interline agreements) with other airlines.

Today, Cubana de Aviación is operating in:

- Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.
- Fort-de-France, Martinique.
- Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe.
- Port-au-Prince, Haiti.
- Nassau, Bahamas.

Code-share agreements have been signed with COPA and AIR CARAIBE airlines, with the latter serving to establish air connection between the French-speaking islands of the Eastern Caribbean and Cuba, in addition to which, consideration is currently being given to a Project with Intercaribbean Airways to establish a connection with the rest of the English-speaking islands. In both cases, the objective is to intensify frequencies and increase passenger and cargo transport mainly from Cuban airports in the central and eastern zones of the country, so that within two years, a high degree of connectivity could be achieved and work could continue with the signatory countries of the Air Transport Agreement (ATA) to develop transportation among the member countries of the ACS.

Interline agreements for passengers and cargo have also been signed with most of the airlines existing in the countries of the Caribbean, which allows connectivity to different islands.

It is fitting to assess previous meetings of the SCT and revisit ideas for actions that continue to be extremely applicable:

During the 20th MSCT convened in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, from June 30 to July 1, 2011, a project was presented that established the "Bases for the creation of a commercial cooperation alliance among the airlines of ACS countries". This appears in Annex V of the Rapporteur's Report of said meeting and the presentation was submitted to the Special Committee for reconsideration. *This was done by then Director of the SCT, Eduardo José Angulo.*

At that same meeting, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Suriname stressed the importance of facilitating travel through alliances to increase tourism, reduce high costs, develop direct lines and connections, improving service quality. Also, the Dominican Republic emphasised the importance of the small and medium airlines operating short and medium routes, as well as the importance of public-private plans regarding the issue of alliances.

In addition to the foregoing and during the 21st Meeting of the SCT, Dr. Claudia Esguerra presented the study on: "the need to examine the possibilities of the demand for air transport among Member Countries", which appears in Annex VI of the Rapporteur's Report of said meeting, outlining other proposals of ideas expressed and analysed:

Having evaluated the foregoing, I present the following proposed resolutions:

That the Secretariat invite and encourage those countries that have not yet signed the Air Transport Agreement to do so.

That an ad-hoc working group be created, initially comprising Cuba and countries that wish to participate, to revisit the content of the reports cited and others that examined the issue of air transport in the ACS and formulate a new proposal on concrete actions that would support alliances among airlines within a three-month period. That group will also prepare a summary of examples of alliances among the airlines that are headquartered in the Greater Caribbean region.

Said document will be circulated and countries will have two calendar months in which to submit their comments. The resulting report will be presented to the Meeting of the Ministerial Council.