



Eruption of the Grimsvötn volcano in Iceland: letter from the Director General & CEO of IATA to The Right Hon Philip Hammond, Secretary of State for Transport, United Kingdom

Geneva, 23 May 2011

Dear Secretary Hammond,

Further to the eruption of the Grimsvotn volcano in Iceland, I am writing to seek your urgent personal intervention please to ensure the earliest availability of the CAA monitoring aircraft.

As you know, a major lesson from the volcano incident last year was the importance of early, quick and accurate data regarding the location and nature of the volcanic ash plume. Whilst ground-based monitoring systems are now in place, I am very concerned to learn that the CAA aircraft is unavailable. It is astonishing and unacceptable that Her Majesty's Government cashes £3.5 billion each year in Air Passenger Duty but is incapable of using a small portion of that revenue to purchase another Cessna to use as a back-up aircraft. I ask please that you ensure that all possible efforts are made to get the existing aircraft operational in the shortest possible time.

The IATA team is working closely with your officials, NATS, the European Aviation Crisis Coordination Cell and other organisations to ensure the most appropriate response to the volcano cloud. There have, most certainly, been improvements since the volcanic eruption in April 2011, and I am encouraged by EASA's issuance of guidance material for States.

Nevertheless, I remain very concerned at this point about the lack of formal agreement at the political level on how individual States will handle their regulatory responsibility in the declaration of airspace. In particular, non-European registered airlines may encounter additional difficulty obtaining access to European airspace as their Regulators will be less familiar with the situation. As you know, we need a clear, consistent and appropriate response, which is workable for all airlines globally, not a repeat of the fragmented mess that happened last year.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further assistance from IATA and the airline community.

Sincerely,

Giovanni Bisignani  
Director General and CEO  
IATA – International Air Transport Association  
Montreal – Geneva

cc: Messrs. Wolfgang Prock-Schauer, CEO BMI  
Steve Ridgway, CEO Virgin Atlantic Airways  
Keith Williams, CEO BA