

PRESS RELEASE

Issue 2010: 07

Tuesday, 20 April 2010
For Immediate Release
Restoring European Services

Association of Asia Pacific Airlines
(Reg. No.587)
9/F Kompleks Antarabangsa
Jalan Sultan Ismail
50250 Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia
Tel +603 2145 5600
Fax +603 2145 2500
www.aapairlines.org

ASIA PACIFIC AIRLINES KEEN TO RESTORE EUROPEAN SERVICES

Welcome reopening of airspace; safety remains highest priority

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia – The closure of much of European airspace over the past five days has had a significant impact on all airlines operating services to and from Europe. Airlines based in the Asia Pacific region have been forced to cancel most of their European services, resulting in considerable disruption and inconvenience to over 100,000 passengers. In addition, air cargo shipments have been held up resulting in a significant backlog.

Asia Pacific airlines have been taking appropriate action to provide assistance to stranded passengers, including meals and accommodation where appropriate. Every effort is being made to reroute passengers to their intended destinations. However, these efforts are constrained by the ongoing restrictions still being imposed across much of European airspace, and the fact that many major European airports remain closed. Many airlines have waived rebooking fees or cancellation charges for affected flights.

Commenting on the situation, Mr. Andrew Herdman, Director General of the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA) said, "With flights to and from Europe accounting for around 15% of total passenger revenues for major Asia Pacific carriers, lost revenues as a result of flight cancellations are estimated at US\$40 million per day. Asian airlines are also major players in the air freight industry, carrying 40% of global air cargo traffic. The recent disruption has severely impacted the normal flow of 10,000 tonnes a day of high value, time-sensitive, and perishable goods between Asia and Europe. These factors come as another blow to Asia Pacific carriers, who are only just starting to recover from the severe impact of global recession over the past two years."

continued /-

Following a meeting of European Transport ministers on Monday 19 April, it was announced that Eurocontrol, in conjunction with EU member States, is establishing a limited “no-fly zone”, to be regularly updated, as from today.

Mr. Herdman said, “This is certainly a step in the right direction, following pressure exerted by industry calling for a more pragmatic and coherent approach to addressing the current crisis. Instead of blanket closures of national airspace, we need a more scientific assessment of the actual situation concerning the spread of volcanic ash. Greater use of shared data, and collaborative decision making, involving all interested stakeholders, are the key to proper risk assessment. Needless to say, safety is always the over-riding priority, and will never be compromised.”

Looking ahead, Mr. Herdman added, “Asia Pacific airlines are already actively evaluating the re-establishment of services to Europe, contingent on the reopening of the relevant air routes. Once operations can be restored, airlines will be mounting additional flights to help clear the backlog of stranded passengers. Given the risk that access to some major European airports may remain restricted, some airlines are also seeking approval to operate into a number of alternative airports in Europe on a temporary basis.”

Passengers should consult the relevant airline websites for updated information on flight schedules, and register their personal contact information in order to stay fully informed on further developments.

Mr. Herdman concluded, “As a result of the unpredictability of volcanic activity, and changing weather patterns, there will be ongoing uncertainty regarding the scope and scale of the proposed no-fly zone. At this stage, it is not possible to predict, with any degree of confidence, how long it will be before normal air services can be fully restored.”

Looking beyond the immediate service recovery efforts, the current crisis has highlighted the need for a thorough re-examination of the way in which such situations are handled in future. AAPA will continue to closely monitor developments, and actively contribute to those discussions, working closely with regulatory authorities and other industry stakeholders.

ENDS

20 April 2010
Issue 2010: 07



Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA)

The AAPA is the trade association for scheduled international airlines based in the Asia-Pacific region. The AAPA permanent secretariat is headquartered in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia with international representation in Brussels and Washington, D.C. Collectively, the region's airlines carry 520 million passengers and 15 million tonnes of cargo, representing one-quarter of global passenger traffic and two-fifths of global air cargo traffic respectively, and thus play a critically important role in the ongoing development of global aviation.

For further information, please contact:

Office of the Director General

Tel +603 2145 5600 Fax +603 2145 2500

email: odg@aapa.org.my