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European flight numbers slump by 7% in November 2008

Brussels, Belgium – In November 2008 there were 7% fewer flights in Europe than during the same month last year. A decline of this magnitude has not been seen since the months immediately following 9/11. Recession, fuel costs and high ticket prices are biting into demand, whilst the credit crunch is both reducing business travel and making financing of operations more challenging.

Even the low-cost carriers, which for years have been the biggest contributor to growth in Europe, had fewer flights in November than in November 2007. This is the first such decline for the low-cost carrier grouping in 15 years.

November is the first full month of operation of the airlines' Winter schedules, for which many airlines had announced cut-backs. Holidays, strikes and the changing number of weekend days in November had a small downward influence on growth, but the November decline is a clear signal of the pattern that is likely to continue until the Spring.

Eastern Europe, particularly Turkey, has continued to see growth and, boosted by the high price of oil, the Russian Federation has been a significant contributor of new flights to the European network. However, with the outlook for the Turkish economy weakening and the falling oil price, even these sources of growth are exhausted..

"In the current economic circumstances, there remains a strong possibility that the traffic situation could weaken further and it could be 2010 before we see much growth again. However, demand in the longer term is still set to rise substantially and traffic in Europe will rise from 10 million flights today to 18 million in 2030; so the long-term problem of congestion remains.", says David Marsh, Manager of Forecasting and Statistics at EUROCONTROL.

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Note to Editors:

EUROCONTROL, the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation, has as its primary objective to develop a seamless, pan-European air traffic management (ATM) system that fully copes with the growth in air traffic, while maintaining a high level of safety, reducing costs and respecting the environment. EUROCONTROL has 38 Member States: Albania, Armenia,

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Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. On 8 October 2002, the Member States and the European Community signed a Protocol on the Accession of the European Community to the revised EUROCONTROL Convention. Pending its entry into force after ratification by all Parties, certain provisions of the Protocol are already being provisionally applied.