

## Information

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### EU/US AGREEMENT – REALISTIC, BUT NOT VISIONARY

The Association of European Airlines has expressed satisfaction that the draft 'second phase' EU/US agreement on air transport, initialled in Brussels yesterday, has established a process for further dialogue. Based upon this agreement, both sides will continue to seek consensus on key areas affecting air transport services between the European Union and the USA. However, AEA also voiced concern that no immediate and tangible outcome could be achieved on the most important issues.

The first phase agreement, signed in 2007 and implemented in 2008, liberalised the transatlantic market between the EU and the USA, but stopped short of addressing the imbalance of opportunity for airlines of either side to access the internal market of the other. *"We still have no guarantee that the US will, in the near or even the longer term, lift its barriers to European investment and create a level playing-field"*, said AEA Secretary General Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus. *"What we have is a process, and a commitment from the US that they will continue to talk about liberalising ownership & control. That in itself is a step forward, but it is not where we hoped we would be"*.

However, the deal has made important strides in areas such as environment, where the US affirmed its commitment to a global approach for CO2 emissions, and in safety and social matters. *"A fully liberal EU-US Open Aviation Area needs to cover a broad spectrum of issues, and the tools to address these are now in place, but it also needs to be built on fair and equal opportunities for both sides, and that is still a distant prospect"*, said Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus.

EU-US aviation relations are a key component in the ongoing process of dismantling regulatory structures on a global scale. Little by little, air transport is moving away from the traditional bilateral agreements governing market access of airlines. *"The signals sent by yesterday's agreement will be noted in capitals around the world"*, said the AEA Secretary General. *"This is another step towards liberalisation, and we welcome it as such. But a lot of work, vision and tenacity lies ahead for politicians and regulators to create an aviation framework which will reduce distortions to competition globally, and enable airlines around the world to provide the services customers need in an increasingly globalised economy"*.

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