



PRESS
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EBC supports liberalisation of air transportation and calls for direct flights to Europe from Haneda Airport

June, 2007 – The European Business Council in Japan (EBC) Airline Committee expressed today support for the policy report released by the Council of Economic and Fiscal Policy (CEFP) yesterday calling for far-reaching aviation liberalisation. The EBC Airline Committee said that it was pleased to see that, finally, the political focus has been put on the issue of aviation liberalisation and called for the Government of Japan to swiftly move ahead with the reforms that will bring so much benefit to Japanese Consumers.

The debate in the council has largely been based upon the findings of the Asia Gateway Strategy Council, which placed emphasis on the need to open up Haneda for more charter operations as well as for regular international traffic, mainly to Asia. The EBC is pleased to see the opening up of Haneda to international traffic, but sees no reason to assign new runway slots for flights to a certain region only and to those carriers which are capable of operating charter flights out of Japan. Instead, allocation of slots should be based on demand and fair distribution among all carriers ready to serve the market.

- We are very pleased to see that the issue of aviation liberalisation finally is being discussed seriously in Japan. If Japan intends to serve as a gateway to Asia, it is strategically important to also have good connections to and from Europe, said Mr. Otto Benz, Chairman of the EBC Airlines Committee and General Manager of Lufthansa German Airlines for Japan.

The need for an increased number of flights to Europe has far too long been overshadowed by the U.S – Japan bilateral aviation treaty, putting preferential focus on trans-pacific routes. As a result, European carriers are lining up to increase frequencies and to add on new destinations. The lack of new slots at Narita and strict regulations on pricing have forced European Airlines to shift new capacity into other Asian hubs such as Hong-Kong, Shanghai, Beijing and even Seoul, but not Tokyo. EBC maintains that this issue needs to be addressed properly if Japan is to secure its position as a Gateway to and from Asia. The EBC urged therefore the Government to take into consideration the recommendations submitted to the Council by the private sector members on May 25 when crafting new aviation policies.

-The expert group has pointed out that restrictions on pricing and access to slots have curbed competition on EU – Japan routes, to the harm of consumers. It is now crucial that the Government takes full advantage of opening up Haneda for international flights and adopts measures that boost competition and do not introduce new discrimination between carriers and different types of operations, Mr. Otto Benz concluded.

About the EBC:

The European Business Council (EBC) is the trade policy arm of the 18 European national chambers of commerce and business associations in Japan. Established in 1972, the EBC works to improve the trade and investment environment for European companies in Japan. The EBC currently represents more than 3,000 local European companies and individuals who are members of their national chambers of commerce. 350 of these companies participate directly in the EBC's 28 sector-based committees.

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