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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Council

Subject: **Any other business**

Air Connectivity - the way forward

- Information from the Cyprus delegation, on behalf of the Cypriot, Bulgarian, Estonian, Greek, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese and Slovak delegations

Delegations will find, attached, an information note prepared by the delegation of Cyprus on the above-mentioned subject for consideration under "Any other business" at the meeting of the Council (Transport, Telecommunications and Energy) on 9 December 2021.

Transport Council 9 December 2021

Any other business: Air Connectivity – the way forward

TTE Council – 9 December 2021

- *Information from the Republic of Cyprus on behalf of the Cypriot, Bulgarian, Estonian, Greek, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese and Slovak delegations*

Air connectivity remains worryingly at low levels despite initial optimistic forecasts by various stakeholders on the recovery post-pandemic. Most importantly, uneven recovery across the Union is ranging from full recovery to -40% pre-pandemic traffic levels. Load factors remain low across all operators, despite the introduction of the Digital Green Certificate and the resumption of travel within the Union. The resurgence of the virus in many EU member states diminishes the optimism of the past couple of months, jeopardizing the gains achieved and putting at risk the economic recovery. It also proves the point that a comprehensive temporary framework needs to be in place to facilitate the speedy recovery of the sector.

Concurrently, the industry is facing increasing sustainability challenges and urgently needs to transition to environmentally sustainable growth and decarbonize in line with the Paris Agreement. The Commission proposed a number of legislative measures which aim to aid the industry in its efforts to decarbonize. However, taking into consideration the current state of the sector, we need to ensure that the legislative proposals will a) safeguard the level playing field of the single aviation market, but not adversely affect the competitiveness of our industry, b) not lead to increased consumer prices and c) not put at disadvantage and disproportionately affect peripheral and insular Member States that rely mostly or exclusively on Aviation for their connectivity needs. The transition to zero emissions in Aviation needs to be achieved via explicit and tangible measures that will ensure a smooth and just transition for all Member States.

In the June 2021 Transport Council, Cyprus along with Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia presented the Air Connectivity Declaration, calling on the Commission to take measures to address the connectivity gap across the Union resulting from the ongoing pandemic. We called for a plan that will address the transportation needs of the people, the single market and the economy of the Union and at the same time ensure environmental

sustainability and the competitiveness of our industry. A plan that will ensure that social cohesion and integration continues ultimately serving the needs of EU citizens, and society at large.

The Air Connectivity Declaration presented in the June 2021 Transport Council meeting provides the principles which should guide our future work.