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April 22, 2010, 11:41 am

Volcano Crisis Could Delay Emissions Regulation, Airline Chief Says

By [JAMES KANTER](#)



**Politics &
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The top representative for the airline industry asserted Thursday that the disruption caused by the eruption of an Icelandic volcano had undermined efforts to include aviation in the European Union's [Emissions Trading System](#).

Accurate and up-to-date information about emissions of greenhouse gases from aircraft is needed before airlines could join the European Union system, said Giovanni Bisignani, the director general of the [International Air Transport Association](#).

Yet aircraft have burned far less fuel — and thus emitted less carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases — than would ordinarily have been the case because of the near-absence of flights across large parts of Europe and the North Atlantic in recent days.

“We’ve seen such a dramatic level of reduced capacity as a result of the crisis that the data this year won’t be representative,” Mr. Bisignani said in an interview in Brussels. “You cannot use this year as a base year to calculate an airline’s normal amount of emissions,” he said, adding that there may be a need to “postpone” aspects of the regulation.

[Connie Hedegaard](#), the European Union’s climate commissioner, was quick to reject that suggestion.

“Although I know it’s a difficult situation for the airlines, I think that that is not an appropriate excuse for saying, ‘Why should we not be excluded here?’” she said in an interview.

The I.A.T.A. “has always argued against this piece of European legislation and now they are just trying to find a new argument,” she said.

Under European Union law, all commercial aircraft that land in union countries or take off from one of its airports will have to start paying for some pollution permits beginning in 2012. The European Union

plans to tighten the “cap” on those permits between now and 2020. The goal is to drive up the cost of permits and force industries including aviation to invest in greener technologies.

Experts at the European Commission said the total amount of permits allocated free in 2012 would be unaffected by the volcano crisis because that calculation was based on average emissions from 2004 to 2006. But the experts said the crisis could affect the way that the European Commission distributed permits.

“The reduced activity could result in small changes in the distribution of free allowances between aircraft operators,” the commission said in a statement on Thursday. “However, any such impacts are likely to be tiny as most operators have been impacted by the flight restrictions,” it said.

I.A.T.A. and many of the world’s largest airlines [have long opposed plans](#) by the European Union to include them in the system. The system works similarly to other “[cap and trade](#)” systems operating regionally in the United States, but is far larger.

On Thursday Mr. Bisignani reiterated his organization’s view that Europe was overstepping international aviation rules by imposing the rules on international carriers, and he said the [International Civil Aviation Organization](#), a United Nations body, should broker a global deal to regulate aviation emissions to avoid a patchwork of competing systems.

Mr. Bisignani also said that the authorities in countries like China and Japan soon could make formal complaints to E.U. authorities about including foreign carriers in the European system.

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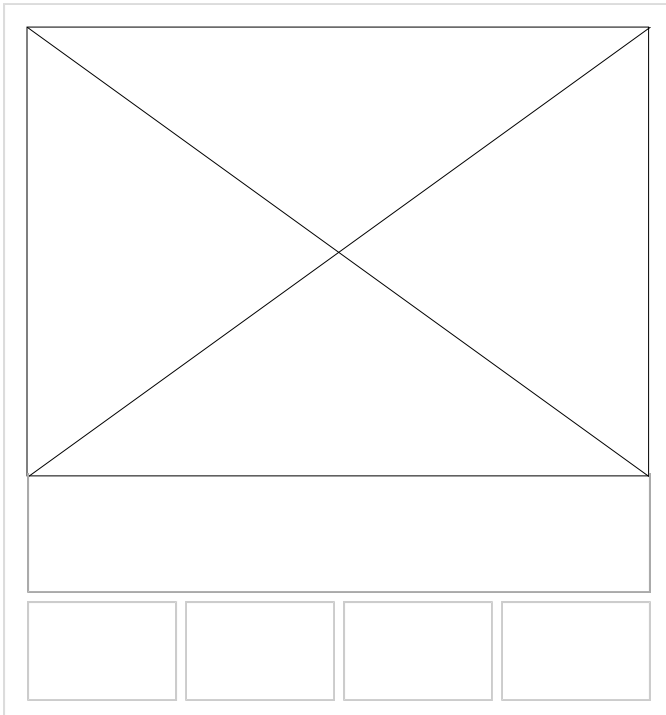
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