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Sierra Club • Union of Concerned Scientists • US Climate Action Network
World Wildlife Fund

June 21, 2011

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we are extremely disappointed by reports that some in your Administration are opposing efforts by the European Union to reduce carbon pollution from the aviation sector. During preparations for the upcoming June 22 EU-US bilateral aviation meeting, some administration officials have apparently taken a disturbingly strident stance opposing the EU Aviation Directive – a stance that is wrong on legal, policy, ethical, and environmental grounds. Rather than seeking to block the *only* program in the world that sets enforceable limits on carbon pollution from aviation, the Administration should join with the EU in taking meaningful steps to ensure that the aviation sector significantly reduces its contribution to global warming.

The Aviation Directive is carefully crafted to fall well within the requirements of international law. It is non-discriminatory and applies even-handedly to all flights landing in or departing from EU airports regardless of origin or destination, and to the operators of those flights regardless of the airline's home country. The program requires a 3% emissions reduction (compared to a 2004-2006 baseline) by 2013, and a 5% reduction by 2020; it is flexible in design, giving airlines multiple compliance options to meet these emissions control obligations. Moreover, flights arriving from countries with programs equivalent to the EU's are exempted altogether.

A dozen years of international negotiations attempting to address aviation pollution have yet to yield standards to control these emissions. In the absence of a global agreement on reducing carbon pollution from the aviation sector, action by the EU is a sensible first step. It gives airlines complete flexibility in deciding when, where and how to reduce their carbon pollution. Furthermore, U.S.-based airlines have already requested a substantial amount of free permits from the EU, which would cover the vast majority of their compliance obligations.

In addition, since increased efficiency is one of the principal ways of achieving reductions, the law sends an important signal to airlines that investments in more fuel-efficient aircraft will be rewarded now and into the future – including aircraft such as the Boeing 787, which its producer characterizes as having “unmatched fuel efficiency” and using “20 percent less fuel for

comparable missions than today's similarly sized airplane.”¹ Undercutting such incentives is bad for airlines, aircraft makers, air passengers and effective emission-reduction efforts alike.

We urge your Administration to take a different position – one that works with the EU to effectively implement actions to reduce aviation's global warming pollution and to generate revenue for climate action in developing countries. Trying to simply block the EU Aviation Directive would be utterly inconsistent with efforts to curtail global warming.

Sincerely,

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¹ <http://www.boeing.com/commercial/787family/background.html>