



**MINISTERIAL DECLARATION
ON THE WAY FORWARD
OF THE FUNCTIONAL AIRSPACE BLOCK EUROPE CENTRAL
(LUXEMBOURG, 8 OCTOBER 2015)**

1. We, the Ministers and the State Secretaries, responsible for the aviation sector, of the six Member States of the Functional Airspace Block Europe Central (FABEC) Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland, met on 8 October 2015 in Luxembourg, to discuss the way forward of FABEC.
2. With the ratification of the FABEC Treaty in 2013 and the establishment of the Functional Airspace Block Europe Central, the six Member States have aimed to jointly achieve optimal performance in the areas relating to safety, environmental sustainability, capacity, cost-efficiency and military mission effectiveness, by the design of a seamless airspace and the organisation of air traffic management (ATM) in the airspace concerned regardless of existing boundaries. Recalling that Functional Airspace Blocks are one of the main pillars of the Single European Sky, we reconfirm the importance of FABEC, considering its challenging geographic position, dimensions and traffic flows, as an enabler to achieve optimal performance and to modernise our common ATM system as a permanent, steady task.
3. We recognise that the FABEC Treaty contains an ambitious set of objectives, which would allow for far-reaching measures in order to optimize air traffic management, such as further cross-border delegations of services, more common systems and services or reorganizing routes and airspace structures, while taking into account the evolving military requirements. While continuing work towards these objectives, care must be taken to ensure in parallel the continued political and social acceptance, including on extensive measures.
4. We note with satisfaction the achievements of FABEC since its establishment. With its institutional setup and its governance in place, FABEC is now fully functional to develop initiatives and implement projects, which aim at improving the collective performance of the overall ATM system. Moreover, FABEC has proven to be an enabler for strengthened cooperation between Member States, with both civil and military authorities, their national supervisory authorities and their Air Navigation Service Providers. By enhancing their working relations, they have jointly made a considerable effort to develop and launch initiatives and airspace projects.
5. As a result, FABEC has already achieved quite significant improvements in the performance areas. Safety remains at a high level and FABEC reached the objectives in this domain. Overall horizontal flight efficiency (environmental performance) achieved excellent scores. Capacity improved substantially and sustainably to a level never recorded before, which translates in reducing the en-route delay considerably compared to the situation in 1999 when the Single European Sky was launched. Cost-efficiency was improved despite the challenging economic situation which caused a lesser traffic growth than expected. Moreover, military mission effectiveness should be safeguarded as has been the case so far. We are committed to contribute adequately to the overall achievement of the Union-wide performance targets as set out in our common FABEC Performance Plan for the second reference period.



6. We commit ourselves to the successful realisation of already adopted airspace projects and launched activities, particularly the airspace projects South East, CBA Land / Central West and Free Route Airspace. These new air route systems will improve performance of the common ATM system, notably by contributing to the safety of air traffic, reducing its environmental emissions and increasing the capacity. While recalling these projects shall be justified by their overall added value, including optimal use of technical and human resources, on the basis of cost-benefit analyses, taking also into account that SESAR operational benefits will come only progressively and starting 2020, we endeavour to address potential technical and political issues arising in the course of their implementation. We encourage the national aviation administrations, the national supervisory authorities and the Air Navigation Service Providers to continue their cooperation to the fullest extent possible with the aim to work towards further integration of the ATM system fulfilling needs of civil and military traffic in the FABEC area and thus to contribute to steadily enhance SES performance.
7. Some improvements have already been realized as regards performance and optimization, but all the results will be recorded in the medium or long term. Regarding the common charging policy by establishing a common charging zone and by applying a single unit rate for en-route traffic as foreseen in the FABEC Treaty, for the longer term, we investigate a possible coherent and stable financial framework taking into account the charging objectives of the FABEC Treaty and the pertinent Single European Sky charging and performance regulations. We emphasise the perspective to adopt concrete arrangements for the temporary financial compensation for cross-border service provision and changes in the airspace design and route structure, on a case by case basis and building on the works achieved in this area.
8. Finally, we do support the view that FABEC as implemented complies with the requirements on functional airspace blocks and EU law on Single European Sky. Nevertheless it needs to be acknowledged that ensuring the optimised design and the management of a seamless airspace is a challenging and, in addition, continuing process for all parties involved. The framework is in place and the necessary efforts are made by FABEC to achieve objectives. We are also committed to further improve our cooperation on FABEC, to meet regularly on this topic, and to keep the European Commission informed on its progress.