



Arezzo, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024

To the attention of the Representatives from all the  
World's governments attending the Climate Change  
Conference (UNFCCC COP 29), Baku, Azerbaijan  
11 - 22 November 2024

### **Climate-altering emissions produced by air transport**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am the President of the Italian Association of Doctors for the Environment - ISDE Italy, a member association of the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE).

The main purpose of ISDE is to help defend our environment both locally and globally to prevent illnesses, ensure the necessary conditions for health, and improve the quality of life.

It is now clear to everyone how environmental pollution and the climate emergency are tacking the planet, the human species and all other living species to a point of no return. Actions must be taken immediately and on multiple fronts, i.e. the International scientific community, the UN in the person of its secretary general António Guterres, and also Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum* urge us to do.

Therefore, we must intervene in the right way and without any more delays by contrasting the loss of biodiversity, habitat deterioration, and climate change, with industrial and agricultural production processes based on the circular economy, with the use of truly renewable energy sources, a new type of mobility, and healthier individual and collective lifestyles. Safeguarding the environment and preventing new global pandemics also involve the relentless pursuit of peace through peace talks.

All wars, like the war in Ukraine and the horrible and bloody fights in the Middle East, have a very heavy impact not only in terms of loss of human lives but also in terms of environmental devastation and air, water and soil pollution. It should also be considered that the global war industry contributes significantly to climate change through the use of fossil fuels for ships, aircraft tanks and the movement of troops and the production of bombs, rockets and ammunition.

We would like to draw your attention in particular to air transport, which not only contributes significantly to environmental pollution and climate change with its hazardous emissions, but also harms people's health. Precisely because of this awareness, more than fifteen years ago, we set up a specific study group on the topic: 'Air transport as a factor in environmental pollution and health risk', coordinated by Dr Antonella Litta.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF DOCTORS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT  
ASSOCIAZIONE MEDICI PER L'AMBIENTE - ISDE ITALIA ODV

Rapporto consultivo con l'OMS (Organizzazione Mondiale della Sanità)  
Via XXV Aprile, 34 - 52100 Arezzo - Tel. 057523612  
C.F. 92006460510 - Isde@isde.it - www.isde.it

Air traffic is in fact a major source of particulate matter and greenhouse gases emissions and strongly contributes not only to climate change and air pollution, but also to acoustical and electro-magnetic pollution, as shown by an increasing number of articles and scientific research.

During the last decades, air traffic has recorded an almost constant growth — except for periods of lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic — especially in the freight sector and low-cost flights related to the so-called “hit-and-run” tourism, thus determining a significant increase of its negative impact on the environment, especially in terms of air and acoustic pollution, and a major contribution to climate change.

In 2022, the IPCC's Sixth Report showed that immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are needed to limit global warming to 1.5 °C, and that the aviation sector is still far from taking steps to contribute to this containment.

According to the European Aviation Environmental Report 2022

(<https://www.easa.europa.eu/eco/eaer/downloads#download-summary-2022>)

emissions of air pollutants from the aviation sector have increased in the European Union. Specifically, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from all flights departing from EU27+EFTA airports reached 147 million tons in 2019, an increase of 34% since 2005.

Also according to this Report, the number of flights from EU27+EFTA airports grew by 15% between 2005 and 2019 to reach 9.3 million, while passenger-kilometres almost doubled (+90%).

Total traffic in 2023 (measured in revenue passenger kilometers or RPKs) rose 36.9% compared to 2022.

Globally, full year 2023 traffic was at 94.1% of pre-pandemic (2019) levels.

December 2023 total traffic rose 25.3% compared to December 2022 and reached 97.5% of the December 2019 level ([https://www.iata.org/en/pressroom/2024-releases/2024-01-31-02/#:~:text=Total%20traffic%20in%202023%20\(measured,of%20the%20December%202019%20level\)](https://www.iata.org/en/pressroom/2024-releases/2024-01-31-02/#:~:text=Total%20traffic%20in%202023%20(measured,of%20the%20December%202019%20level)))

The Eurocontrol site shows that 9 million tonnes more CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (+12%) than in 2022 for intra-European flights

(<https://www.eurocontrol.int/sites/default/files/2024-01/eurocontrol-european-aviation-overview-20240118-2023-review.pdf>).

On 29<sup>th</sup> October 2016, ISDE Italy promoted in Florence *the First National Study Day on Health and Environmental impact of aviation*. The aim of this Study Day was to bring to the national and international attention the results of decades of scientific research, namely that air transportation contributes significantly to climate changes, and that airport facilities with related activities are considerable sources of environmental pollution and represent a concrete health risk for people living near airports and for the people employed in those facilities.

Unfortunately, no concrete and binding restriction regarding the urgent need to reduce air transportation have come since the Kyoto protocol, nor since the most recent international climate conferences (i.e., Paris COP 2015, Marrakech COP 2016, Katowice COP 2018, Madrid 2019, Glasgow 2021, Sharm el-Sheikh 2022, Dubai 2023), and this is the reason why it becomes more difficult to achieve the purpose of limiting the increase of the average global temperature within 2°C compared to global temperature levels of the preindustrial period.

We should also underline that air quality improvement plans drawn up in major cities in Europe, USA and Asia, do not yet include the reduction and rationalisation of air traffic within the measures to counteract air pollution and climate change.

For the above-mentioned, we believe that the countries attending the next Climate Change Conference should lay down national and international programmes for the reduction and rationalization of air transport in order to counteract concretely climate change and to limit health risk for exposed communities.

For these reasons, please find here enclosed some scientific contributions on this topic. The article “Air transport and climate” gives a particular framework of the problems caused by air transport in Italy.

Furthermore, we would like to draw your attention to the publication “*Pulire l’aria. La vergogna di volare*” (*Cleaning the air. The shame of flying*), Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, Florence 2020, available for now only in Italian language. We also attach a relevant international bibliography on this topic.

In consideration of what we have hereby said, ISDE Italy strongly hopes that the next Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 29) will lead to relevant and concrete decisions binding all participating countries to reduce the climate-altering emissions produced by air transport.  
Many thanks for your attention.

Yours faithfully,



Dr. Roberto Romizi  
President of the Italian Association of Doctors for the Environment  
ISDE Italy

Contacts:

Associazione italiana medici per l'ambiente - ISDE Italia  
Via XXV Aprile n.34, 52100 Arezzo, Italy  
Phone: +390575 23612  
Web: [www.isde.it](http://www.isde.it) - E-mail: [isde@isde.it](mailto:isde@isde.it)

\*\*\*

Antonella Litta  
*National coordinator of ISDE Italy of the study group on the topic "Air transportation as a factor of environmental pollution and damage to the health"*  
via Monte Amiata 5/C Ronciglione (Vt) 01037- Italy  
E-mail: [isde.viterbo@gmail.com](mailto:isde.viterbo@gmail.com) ; [antonella.litta@gmail.com](mailto:antonella.litta@gmail.com)  
Phones: +39 3383810091