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IAOPA World Assembly Convenes Next Month

Every two years delegates from IAOPA affiliates gather together in a forum to determine the future course of world general aviation. On 10 June the 24th IAOPA World Assembly will open for business in Athens, Greece to discuss issues of critical interest to general aviation operators worldwide.

Over the next four days assembly delegates will discuss airspace access, environmental issues, regulatory formation, new technology equipment requirements, and the effects of taxes, costs and fees. Special presentations on unmanned aerial vehicles, safety and security will bring delegates up to date on these essential topics. Representatives from ICAO, the European Commission, Eurocontrol, and EASA will make presentations and be available to discuss issues of interest. Flowing from these discussions will be a series of resolutions that will form the policies to guide IAOPA affiliates and world general aviation for years to come.

AOPA-Hellas is hosting the assembly and has planned an array of social and cultural events to complement the working sessions. The highlight of these events will be a day trip to the island of Santorini, an idyllic tourist attraction in the Aegean Sea. At the end of the assembly AOPA-Hellas is sponsoring Icarus 2008, the first international aviation expo in Greece, featuring a general aviation air show and industry exhibit at an airfield close to Athens.

There is still time to participate in the World Assembly – see aopa.gr/en. This promises to be one of the most significant and entertaining of the IAOPA world assemblies. Importantly, your participation in the assembly will provide important guidance to world general aviation for the critical times ahead.

ICAO Opens UAS Study Group Meetings

The first session of ICAO's study group on unmanned aerial systems (UAS) was recently held in Montreal. Approximately 30 participants, largely from CAAs around the world, met for four days to lay plans for the harmonization of UAS activities world-wide. IAOPA Representative to ICAO Frank Hofmann represented general aviation at the meeting.

The group heard presentations from a variety of active individuals including results of operational trials. Doug Davis, Chairman of the group, noted that the UAS industry is facing significant technical issues which will need to be resolved systematically and in a step-by-step fashion in order to assure that the aviation community sees the introduction of these systems as safe and practical. The general consensus was that technology was not yet advanced enough to have UAS operations in un-segregated airspace, secure from unacceptable risks and failure rates.

It was realized that some guidance material would soon be needed in which both States and ICAO could eventually develop standards. The group decided not to address ICAO Annexes specifically at this point, instead feeling that many States not already involved with UAVs needed high-level information and guidance. To that end, the participants divided into three working groups to deal with airworthiness, operations, and air traffic management issues. IAOPA has volunteered to be the lead on issues dealing with the licensing of the pilots. The sub-groups will each develop guidance material, the first draft of which is to be circulated within the groups by mid-June. The aim is to have the complete guidance material ready for submission to ICAO by November of this year.

Out of this work will then grow a gap analysis with the ICAO Annexes and the work will begin to generate standards and recommended practices required for UAS operations.

AOPA-Sweden Leads Effort on Fuel Tax Changes

Lars Hjelmberg of AOPA-Sweden reports that after many months of effort the Swedish government will likely pass legislation that will exempt major portions of general aviation from fuel taxes. While fuel used for "private pleasure flying" will still be taxed all other forms of general aviation, including corporate and business flying and flight training will be exempt from fuel taxes.

Hjelmberg said, "The entire general aviation community in Sweden developed and presented a large number of written comments to the Ministry of Finance in order to modify the proposal. The outcome of the written comments to the Ministry is a great victory for Swedish general aviation."

The report used to support the arguments for general aviation's fuel tax exemption developed at Hjelmberg's direction makes a number of legal arguments that may be useful to other IAOPA European affiliates. It will be made available by Hjelmberg on request. Additionally, Hjelmberg's new corporate website www.hjelmco.com contains data and material about the future of avgas and what can be done to improve its continued availability.

AOPA-China News

Phillip Hui of AOPA-China reports that there has been much activity regarding aviation in that country, some of which is designed to encourage the development of general aviation. Captain Yu, AOPA-China President regularly works with the General Administration of Civil Aviation of China (CAAC) and related government ministries to develop a consensus of opinion that will be favorable to general aviation.

A recent government plan is designed to encourage the industry to develop more general aviation business services, ground services, insurance and capital development. The plan also calls for policies to lower the barrier of entry for businesses to offer repair and maintenance facilities. Captain Yu notes, "Hopefully, such repair and maintenance capability will be increased in due course. We believe this is crucial and very basic. We must be able to first accomplish the basics correctly."

Other parts of the plan include policies to help improve the conditions for the development of general aviation, namely:

- Open up low altitude airspace
- Accelerate development of general aviation airports
- Provide tax breaks for imported aircraft and business ventures
- Development of reasonable operating standards
- Increase pilot recruitment
- Increase supply and availability of aviation gasoline

A major step forward will be the revision of air laws regulating general aviation. A major issue will be to properly define civil and general aviation activities in accordance with ICAO standards.

Captain Yu comments, "We have a complex situation to deal with: on the one hand we are establishing new regulations, guidelines and standards for development of the general aviation industry while we are completing the amendment of the old regulations. Hopefully, after this, the cost of establishing a general aviation business in China will be lowered for both national and international parties."

AOPA-China reports steady growth of general aviation with more than 10,000 hours flown in 2007, 10 percent more than 2006. The general aviation fleet comprises 805 aircraft.

In a related story, IAOPA Secretary General John Sheehan met with a delegation from the China Aviation Industrial Base at IAOPA headquarters on 24 April to discuss issues relating to general aviation development in China. The CAIB is a government organization charged with the responsibility of developing aviation within China and is currently focusing on general aviation. They plan to produce a major general aviation exposition and show in Xi an, China during May 2009. Sheehan provided information to the group regarding general aviation issues from the pilot and aircraft owner's perspective.

Tempelhof Airport Vote Fails to Prevent Closure

The historic Tempelhof Airport serving Berlin is now one step closer to extinction after a recent public referendum failed to attract the required number of votes to save the facility. While a majority of those who voted did so in favor of keeping the airport open not enough people voted in the election to consider the referendum valid.

Berlin's mayor plans to close both Tempelhof and Tegel airports, leaving just the major airline airport, Schoenefeld, to serve the capital city until the new Brandenburg Airport is completed in 2011. Tempelhof could close later this year.

AOPA-Germany Managing Director Michael Erb remarked, "The failed referendum is a great disappointment; we have worked hard to save this airport. We are now evaluating possible options to prevent the closure of this valuable airport."

Belize Applies for IAOPA Affiliation

Thomas Wierum reports that on March 16, 2008 at the first annual Belize Fly In held at his home base Central Farm Airstrip in the Cayo District, 15 pilots decided to form an AOPA and request affiliation with IAOPA. Subsequently a constitution and bylaws was signed by three members of the group who will serve as the organization's initial officers.

Wierum said, "Belize has lots of potential for general aviation and there are lots of things to improve. We shall endeavor to make AOPA-Belize a success and through this success achieve some of our goals to make general aviation in Belize safer and more enjoyable in the near future. I welcome any help, tips, and information that you can spare."

Belize has 14 registered private aircraft plus an additional 8 foreign registered aircraft that operate within the country. Private pilots number 17 but there are an additional number of pilots with foreign pilot certificates that have been validated by Belize authorities. There are 13 government registered aerodromes with an additional 18 private airstrips.

For those who have been around a while one of the officers of AOPA-Belize is Holger von Bulow, who served in a number of AOPA roles in Europe, notably as IAOPA Europe Vice President during the 1980s.

New Leadership at AOPA-Austria

AOPA-Austria held their General Assembly on 26 March 2008 in Vienna. Due to the passing of Jack Meinl, former president of AOPA-Austria, a new board was elected and Mr. Julius Meinl, son of the deceased President Jack Meinl, was elected unanimously as president.

Julius Meinl has been passionate about aviation since his childhood. He has an ATP license and has been a pilot since 1977. He is currently flying a Falcon. Julius Meinl is Chairman of Meinl Bank AG (Vienna, Austria).

The new board consists of: Julius Meinl, President - Johann Rausch, Vice-President Peter Schmidleitner, Vice President - Peter Tiefbrunner, Vice-President - Doris Gammer, Treasurer - Joachim Janezic, Adviser - Christian Schleifer, Adviser - Herbert Dobek, Secretary.

Plan to attend the 24th IAOPA World Assembly

The International Council of Aircraft Owner and Pilot Associations represents the interests of more than 470,000 pilots and aircraft owners in 66 countries. Formed in 1962, IAOPA is dedicated to promoting the peaceful uses of general aviation and aerial work worldwide.

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