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Oman Air exposes IATA's Report And Developments Within The Travel And Tourism Industry

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The International Air Transport Association (IATA), whose figures exclude domestic flights, represents 250 airlines comprising 94 percent of cross-border scheduled air traffic, has released its full-year traffic results for the year 2006, showing slower but growth that is more profitable. The Middle East was the fastest growing region for both passenger and cargo, recording full-year growth of 15.4% and 16.1% respectively. IATA affirmed in its report that Air transport remains the safest form of travel with 0.65 accidents per million flights for Western-built jets, which is equivalent to one accident for every 1.5 million flights. IATA's member airlines performed significantly better than the global average with a hull-loss rate of 0.48 accidents per million flights, or one accident for every two million flights.



In this regard, Usama Bin Karim Al Haremi, Corporate Communications and Media Department Manager in Oman Air said that IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) is a condition of IATA membership. IOSA is the airline industry's first globally accepted audit programme using internationally harmonized standards. All IATA airlines must complete an audit by the end of 2007 and close all findings by the end of 2008, to maintain membership. Currently 144 airlines are on the IOSA registry, including 121 IATA members. Oman Air has successfully completed the audit, which is a global recognition that Oman Air complies with the internationally accepted safety standards. A further pride for Oman Air consist, of being the 24th member in which, has successfully completed the audit out of the 250 IATA members.

He added that the national carrier of Oman has once again exceeded the ceiling of 103,870 passengers in one month, which was accomplished in June 2005, and considered then as an unprecedented achievement since operation in 1993, saying that the carrier actually carried 124672 passengers during the month of May 2007, and 646589 passengers during the first six months of 2007. He mentioned that the airlines in the Middle East also saw the strongest passenger demand growth in May with a 19.6% increase that also boosted load factors to 70.8%. He added that according to IATA's latest traffic results, May delivered a month of strong passenger demand growth and impressive cargo figures. In addition to a 5.5 percent year-on-year rise in international passenger demand, freight demand also increased 5 percent - which was the largest rate of increase since September 2006. He further said that global passenger growth slowed from the 7.6% recorded in 2005 to 5.9% in 2006, while the cargo growth rate increased from 3.2% in 2005 to 4.6% in 2006. Average passenger load factors in 2006 rose to a record high of 76.0%, up from 75.1% in 2005. He noted that all regions except the Middle East saw a decline in passenger traffic growth rates compared to 2005, adding that the industry expects to record a profit of US\$5.1 billion in 2007. This return to profitability has been attributed to higher load factors - which remained strong at 73.7 percent in May as per IATA report.



“Middle East airlines comprised the fastest growing group worldwide in converting to electronic tickets, as carriers race to meet an industry deadline to improve efficiency and prevent ticket abuse. According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), e-ticket volumes in the region increased from 23% at the end of 2006 to 39% at the end of the first quarter of this year. The highest e-ticket penetration was recorded in Morocco, at (62 per cent), followed by Oman (60 per cent), Qatar (57 per cent), and Egypt (57 per cent). The report did not mention UAE figures. (IATA), which has launched e-ticketing initiative at its annual meeting in Singapore in 2004, set the end of 2007 as deadline to implement 100% e-ticketing, but recently approved deadline extension to 31 May 2008: after that date the 60,000 IATA affiliated travel agents around the world at present, will no longer issue paper tickets.” He added.

Al Haremi continued saying that based on Respective Stock Exchanges and Global Research reports, THE Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is witnessing significant investments into its travel and tourism infrastructure. Some \$327 billion worth of projects either are under way or planned, which, by 2020, should add 200 hotels and 100,000 rooms. Airport capacity is expected to increase by 300 million passengers and aircraft fleet size would go up by 150 per cent. Around US\$272bn, worth of tourism projects are expected to be completed in GCC by 2018, and Oman, accounts for 6% out of this. These investments are expected to help lift the region’s T&T (travel and tourism) infrastructure ranking. The GCC countries have enough potential to sustain and improve their tourism sector, as positive trend is not expected to reverse in the near term, especially as GCC countries continue to pump millions of dollars into new projects, airport expansions, and aggressive marketing campaigns.



Oman Air’s Corporate Communications and Media Department Manger highlighted that Oman's government being one of the most pro-active bodies in the region in terms of promoting tourism development. The formation of the Tourism Ministry in 2004 has consolidated Oman’s tourism functions into one organization. The Sultanate indeed is presently taking giant strides towards becoming a tourism and business destination of the Middle East promoting Oman as tourism and business haven, is now a national priority and private participation is essential in implementing tourism strategies of the government. The focus will be on eco-tourism through a multi-pronged strategy that underlines the seriousness of the country’s combined efforts to put itself on the tourism map, where tourism in Oman now represents a lifeline for the economy. There is more focus on the tourism sector today he said, and that Oman Air is doing the utmost to increase awareness of Oman by promoting the country. “It is a promising beginning for modern tourism. In conclusion he affirmed that Post-cyclone, tourism in Oman is healthy and going full-fledged.

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