

EU/CANADA

Open Sky agreement submitted to Council for signature

By Isabelle Smets

The European Commission presented, on 17 February, a proposal for the signature of the Open Sky air agreement, concluded in December 2008, between the EU and Canada. It was submitted to the Council of Ministers' working group, on 21 February, and appears in the provisional agenda of the Transport Council of 30 March. To recall, this agreement is to replace the bilateral air agreements concluded between this country and 19 EU member states. It will, of course, also cover member states that have not yet

concluded an air agreement with Canada (Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovakia and Slovenia).

During the conclusion of negotiations, on 9 December 2008, Transport Commissioner Antonio Tajani had declared that "the new agreement makes the European-Canadian air market one of the most open in the world". It will offer all EU airlines the possibility of operating direct flights to Canada from any EU airport. The agreement does away with all the restrictions relating to itineraries, prices or the number of weekly flights between Canada and the EU. It antici-

pates the gradual opening up of cabotage laws (possibility for a European airline to operate between two Canadian cities - and vice versa) and laws relating to the ownership and control of airlines, two points which continue to hinder negotiations on an Open Sky II agreement with the United States. In the field of safety and security, the agreement anticipates the mutual recognition of standards and the establishment of a 'one stop' safety system, which will exempt passengers, luggage and freight in transit between the EU and Canada from any additional safety measures. ■