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PRINCIPAL SPEAKER BACKS CALLS FOR CABIN AIR QUALITY PUBLIC ENQUIRY

Green Party Principal Speaker Dr. Caroline Lucas has backed the campaign by the Global Cabin Air Quality Executive (GCAQE) for a full public enquiry into substantial reports of contaminated air leaking into passenger aircraft.

The campaign group estimate that numerous chemicals such as tricresyl phosphate and tributyl phosphate, present in oils and lubricants, leak daily into cabin air supplies which get recycled many times over in the course of one flight. According to the group, these chemicals are known to have immuno- and neuro- toxic effects.

Dr. Lucas MEP, who has campaigned on this issue for a number of years in the European Union, said

"I wrote to the European Commission as long ago as 2006 to raise my concerns over contaminated air in aircraft. Monitoring by two UK trade unions, BALPA and TGWU, has revealed numerous examples of pilots suffering from headaches, nausea, fatigue and eye/nose/throat irritation because of short-term exposure to contaminated air. Existing flaws in the labelling and toxicity testing of jet engine oils exacerbate these problems.

"The Commission is yet to take any real and tangible action to address the serious doubts which have been expressed over the quality of cabin air, while the Department of Transport and the European Aviation Safety Agency, in response to my letters, have both effectively absolved themselves of responsibility on the issue.

"Given the huge profits raked in by the aviation sector each year, you might think that airline bosses could spare some money to invest in research and preventative measures, demonstrating that they do take the health and safety of their crews and passengers seriously.

Dr Lucas continued: "The Commission must take steps to regulate air quality on flights and to reduce the impacts on aircraft cabin staff and passengers alike. Specifically, airlines are not currently required to monitor air quality during any phase of a flight on any aircraft. Nor are blood tests for neurological damage carried out on airline cabin staff or frequent flyers.

"The aviation sector must look at solutions such as filters, which could make a significant difference to the quality of air that is supplied to the cockpit and passenger cabin during a flight, improving both working and traveling conditions, and lessening the potential risk to flight safety."

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Green Party Press Office  
020 7561 0282  
<http://www.greenparty.org.uk>

Published and promoted by Jim Killock for the Green Party, both at  
1a Waterlow Road, London N19 5NJ