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## Stop unfair competition in aviation, reassess the EU-Qatar Air Transport Agreement

E4FC strongly opposes the decision of the European Commission to submit the Air Transport Agreement (hereafter: “agreement”) between the EU and the State of Qatar for conclusion to the Council of the EU. We urge the EU Member States to postpone the signature of the agreement and demand the European Commission to reassess the agreement, taking into account the impact of both the COVID-19 crisis and the current environmental policies of the EU, to bring it in line with the changed circumstances.

The agreement, which was initialed in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic, is no longer fit for purpose. Under the current circumstances, granting immediate additional traffic rights to the State of Qatar would negatively impact the recovery of the EU aviation industry, put additional jobs at risk and distort the level playing field.

By proceeding with the signature process, the European Commission blatantly ignores the circumstances the EU aviation industry is currently facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the increasing efforts imposed on the industry to further decarbonize in view of the different European Green Deal initiatives. Should the Commission and EU Member States persist, they would, regrettably, miss the opportunity to adapt the EU-Qatar agreement at a time when other legislations are postponed or reassessed following the COVID-19 pandemic and revised EU climate targets (i.e. Revision of the Airport Charges Directive, Regulation (EC) 1008/2008 and EU rules for the allocation of slots).

If the agreement was to be signed by the EU Member States, it would allow for an immediate substantial and unilateral opening of the EU market to Qatar Airways, an airline that already claimed to be the largest in the world and chose - thanks to uncontrolled state support - to fly more routes than any other airline during the COVID-19 crisis regardless of passenger demand.

Moreover, when the negotiations with the State of Qatar were concluded in March 2019, the European Green Deal and the EU’s 2030 climate objectives did not yet exist. EU law now requires all relevant EU policies, including external trade policy, to promote sustainable development. Yet, the agreement with the State of Qatar only contains ambiguous and non-binding provisions on environmental “cooperation”. Implementing the agreement without



comprehensive and binding environmental requirements that would ensure a level playing field, would strongly undermine the credibility of the EU's climate ambitions.

E4FC urges the EU Member States to postpone the signature of the agreement and demands the European Commission to thoroughly reassess the agreement by conducting an impact assessment taking into account the impact of both COVID-19 and the new environmental policies of the EU, so as to offer the State of Qatar the opportunity to bring the agreement in line with these changed circumstances.

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