Boeing, Virgin Atlantic and GE Aviation to Fly First Commercial Jet on Biofuel

- Virgin Atlantic 747 to make historic flight from London to Amsterdam
- Imperium Renewables selected as biofuel provider for demonstration flight; provides fuel blend containing a mix of babassu and coconut oils
- Pioneering flight is key step in the journey toward sustainable aviation fue

LONDON, Feb. 24, 2008 -- Boeing [NYSE: BA], Virgin Atlantic and GE Aviation today will conduct the first commercial aviation flight using a sustainable biomass-to-liquid fuel mixed with traditional kerosene-based jet fuel. The biofuel flight demonstration highlights the technical feasibility of using biofuels in a commercial jetliner and is a significant step toward a long-term vision of fully sustainable, low-carbon-lifecycle fuel solutions for the aviation industry.

The Virgin Atlantic 747-400 -- registration GV-WOW, operating as Flt. VS811P -- will fly using a biofuel blend composed of babassu oil and coconut oil provided by Seattle-based Imperium Renewables. These oils are economically and socially sustainable and can be found in everyday cosmetic products including lip balm and shaving cream. In addition, the babassu nuts and coconuts were harvested from existing, mature plantations. No modifications were made to either the aircraft or its engines to enable the flight to take place.

"Today marks a biofuel breakthrough for the whole airline industry," said Sir Richard Branson, president of Virgin Atlantic. "Virgin Atlantic and its partners have proved that you can find an alternative to traditional jet fuel and fly a plane on biofuel. This pioneering flight will enable those of us who are serious about reducing our carbon emissions to go on developing the fuels of the future, fuels which will power our aircraft in the years ahead."

"Today's flight is a continuation of a journey we embarked on last year with Sir Richard Branson and Virgin Atlantic to identify more sustainable forms of fuel for the aviation industry," said Marlin Dailey, vice president of Sales, Europe, Russia and Central Asia, Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "Change begins with a vision. Following that, innovation and technologies are essential to proving the feasibility of renewable, alternative fuel sources for an environmentally progressive future of aviation."

"The partnership between Virgin Atlantic, Boeing, GE and Imperium Renewables has advanced our understanding of biofuels for aviation applications," said GE Aviation Manager of Advanced Combustion Engineering Dr. Tim Held. "Prior to this historic flight, the engine ground testing conducted by GE and CFM International required no hardware modifications to the engine, and the fuels performed as expected."

" A successful flight will not only validate the use of biofuels in aviation, but also provide a glimpse into the future of all fuels," said Imperium Renewables President and CEO John Plaza. "Today's biojet fuel offers higher-quality standards and a more sustainable fuel than traditional jet fuel. Additionally, it illustrates the potential for second-generation biojet fuel to be even more viable in the coming years."

In preparation for today's flight, Boeing, GE Aviation and Imperium Renewables conducted extensive laboratory and static-engine testing to evaluate the energy and performance properties of the biofuel blend used in the flight. The Virgin Atlantic flight is the first step in a broader industrywide technology initiative to commercialize alternative fuel sources for aviation.

The results of today's biofuel flight will be analyzed by the collective team and used for research and development of next-generation biofuels that can help to further reduce carbon emissions. Boeing will use findings from this flight as a baseline for conducting another biofuel flight later this year with Air New Zealand.

Babassu oil comes from the nuts of the babassu tree, which is native to Brazil. In addition to its cosmetic uses, its leaves are used to make roofs and paper, which in turn is used to create folders, bags and soap boxes. Coconut oil is used for a variety of applications including oil for biodiesel used in ground transportation. Most coconut plantations are mature and don't contribute to deforestation, while coconut farming is also highly carbon-neutral.

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