Three-dimensional Behaviors of Atmospheric CO$_2$ Revealed by the Comprehensive Observation Network for Trace Gases by Airliner (CONTRAIL) Project

T. Machida$^1$, Y. Sawa$^2$, Y. Niwa$^2$ and H. Matsueda$^2$

$^1$National Institute for Environmental Studies, 16-2 Onogawa, Tsukuba-City, Ibaraki, Japan; +81-29-850-2525, E-mail: tmachida@nies.go.jp

$^2$Meteorological Research Institute, Tsukuba, Japan

Frequent measurements of atmospheric CO$_2$ using Continuous CO$_2$ Measuring Equipment (CME) as well as other greenhouse gases by Automatic Air Sampling Equipment onboard the commercial airliners under the CONTRAIL Project brought us huge numbers of CO$_2$ data in upper air and revealed latitudinal, longitudinal and vertical difference in CO$_2$ variation worldwide. The CONTRAIL Project has been conducted since 2005 using 6 aircraft operated by Japan Airlines. Until 2012, more than 7,000 of CME flights were made between Japan and Europe, South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, Australia, Hawaii and North America, and 13,000 vertical profiles have been obtained there (Figure 1).

In the Northern Hemisphere, large seasonal changes of CO$_2$ in the upper troposphere are found from spring through summer at northern mid-to-high latitudes with significant longitudinal differences; seasonally low CO$_2$ mixing ratios are vertically transported from the surface over the Eurasian continent and then transported eastward to the North Pacific. In the Southern Hemisphere, the CO$_2$ in the upper troposphere increases rapidly from April to June, indicating clearly the inter-hemispheric transport of high CO$_2$ from the Northern Hemisphere winter. The rapid increase in the upper southern lower latitudes is equivalent to about 0.2 Pg increase in carbon.

Figure 1. Flight routes of CME observation and numbers of vertical profiles over the airports.