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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia P.O. Box 3243 Telephone: +251 11 551 7700 / +251 11 518 25 58/ Ext 2558

Website: www.au.int

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

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**THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL WORKING GROUP ON SAATM
KICKED OFF WITH THE EXPERTS' SESSION**



Lomé, Togo, May 25, 2018: The Fourth Meeting of the Ministerial Working Group on the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) kicked off with the experts' session. The workshop is organized by the Department of Infrastructure and Energy at African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration

with the Togolese Republic.

The objectives of the meeting are the following:

1. Harmonization of Bilateral Air Service Agreements (BASAs) among the members of the Single African Air Transport Market;
2. Review of implementation of the prioritized Action Plan for the operation of the SAATM;
3. Adoption and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the operationalization of SAATM;
4. Dissemination and capacity building on the Yamoussoukro Decision Regulatory Texts; and
5. The election of the next Bureau of the Ministerial Working Group.

Furthermore, the meeting will provide a forum to those States that do not currently have any air service agreement, to conclude Yamoussoukro Decision compliant BASAs as appropriate.

Minister of Infrastructure and Transport of the Togolese Republic, H.E. Mr. Ninsao Gnofam in his opening remarks extended his appreciation to the AU Commission for organizing this event under the patronage of the SAATM Champion, President of the Togolese Republic and chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) H.E. Mr. Faure Gnassingbé. The minister encouraged Member States that have not yet joined the already 26 African countries, members of the SAATM, by adhering to the Solemn Commitment to the establishment of the single market. He underlined that the Ministerial Working Group meeting will provide the opportunity for the Champion to interact with the Ministers responsible for the SAATM and offer necessary guidance to all stakeholders on the effective operation of the single market.

Mr. David Kajange, the head of transport and tourism division in the Department of Infrastructure and Energy, addressed the opening ceremony of the meeting and noted the support of the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport of the Togolese Republic, Mr. Ninsao Gnofam to the work related to the SAATM. He emphasized the need to all MS of the African Union to benefit from SAATM and he underlined the importance of having one message to all MS not subscribed to SAATM. He further welcomed the three new member States who joined the SAATM: CAR, Chad, and The Gambia.

Mr. David Kajange briefed the meeting on the main activities on the prioritized action plan of the SAATM formulated during the aviation industry consultation held on the 7th March 2018 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and expressed the particular need for a dynamic communication strategy to strengthen advocacy for the SAATM.

The African Airlines Association (AFRAA) Secretary General, Mr Abdérahmane Berthé, in his opening remarks briefed the meeting about the mission of AFRAA that is to serve African airlines, promote and protect their common interests. He further said that the current membership is 37 airlines representing over 85% of total international traffic carried by all African airlines. Mr Abdérahmane Berthé underlined the challenges facing the sector related to safety and security; high cost of the business; regulations for fair competition and dispute settlement as well as consumer protection. He underlined the need for coordination and the benefit of the mutual cooperation among African airlines for the development of the air transport industry in Africa and to overcome challenges by liberalization of air services and opening up African skies.

The African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) Interim Secretary General Mr. Papa Atoumane FALL described Yamoussoukro Decision as a vehicle to the establishment of SAATM. He acknowledged the commitment of AFCAC to implement the decision of the AU Heads of State and Government. He concluded by a call to remove all restrictions facing the air transport sector.

The main outcomes of the Experts' meeting which will conclude on 27th May 2018 will target the following:

- a) Existing BASAs among Member States of the SAATM are reviewed to remove any restrictions to ensure conformity with the Yamoussoukro Decision ;
- b) New Yamoussoukro Decision compliant BASAs are concluded where non-existent;
- c) MoU on harmonisation of BASAs and operationalization of the SAATM is signed;
- d) MoC between AFCAC, as the Executing Agency, and all RECs is concluded; and
- e) Appointment of a new Bureau of the Ministerial Working Group.

Participants of the meeting are from the African Union Commission; Member States of the SAATM: Ministers in charge of air transport; Directors General of Civil Aviation; Airlines CEOs; African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC); Regional Economic Communities (RECs); Members of the Monitoring Body of the Yamoussoukro Decision; NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency (NPCA); African Airlines Association(AFRAA); The United Nation Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); Representatives of ICAO and IATA-Africa; and Representatives of AfDB and the World Bank.

The outcome of Experts' meeting will be outlined in a report to be submitted to the Ministerial Working Group meeting, scheduled in 28 May 2018.

Notes to the Editor:

The Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) is a flagship project of the African Union Agenda 2063, an initiative of the African Union to create a single unified air transport market in Africa, the liberalisation of civil aviation in Africa and as an impetus to the Continent's economic integration agenda. During the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the OAU / AU in 2013, the African Union (AU) leadership expressed the desire to give a stronger and more ambitious impetus to the Continent's socio-economic development and integration agenda.

On that occasion, the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 was elaborated in which some flagship projects were selected and included on the basis of their high potential for changing the face of Africa substantively in that duration. Among these projects are the

creation of a Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM); the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA); and the African Passport.

The current size of the Single African Air Transport market is comparable to the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite free trade area with 26 countries, a population of 527 million persons, a GDP of \$624 billion and per capita income of US\$1,184. Joining the Single African Air Transport Market is based a variable geometry principle in accordance with Member State's commitment to implementing the decisions/declarations of the Assembly.

The Ministerial Working Group is composed of African Member States that have signed the Solemn Commitment and it is responsible for three main functions:

- (i) following up implementation progress on the establishment of the single market;
- (ii) provide guidance; and
- (iii) spearhead an advocacy campaign to urge the rest of the Member States to join the single market.

In particular, each Minister of the Working Group has responsibility to enable a conducive environment for the full implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision in their respective countries. This includes raising awareness within their State among other Ministers and facilitating the establishment of the Single Market.

The Working Group is open to those States that may wish to join the single market later. The Ministerial Working Group is technically supported by Experts from the air transport sector from their respective countries, the AUC, AFCAC and RECs as well as other key stakeholders, who are responsible for the preparation of its meetings. The Group has since adopted its Rules of Procedure and has developed a Roadmap of specific activities for both the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision and the establishment of the Single Market and the establishment of the Dispute Settlement Mechanism.

The current Member States that have subscribed to the solemn commitment are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo and Zimbabwe.

For further information, kindly contact:

1. Mr. Gamal Ahmed A. Karrar| Communication Officer| Directorate of Information and Communication, African Union Commission | E-mail: GamalK@africa-union.org
2. Mrs. Esther Azaa Tankou | Head, Information Division, Directorate of Information and Communication, African Union Commission | Tel: +251(0) 911361185 | E-mail: yamboue@africa-union.org

For further information: Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: DIC@africa-union.org | Web Site: www.au.int | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia

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