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**DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION**

**Press Release**

**THE AU COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON CALLS ON THE MINISTERIAL WORKING GROUP ON SAATM TO SPEARHEAD A ROBUST ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN TO URGE ALL MEMBER STATES TO JOIN THE SINGLE AIR TRANSPORT MARKET**



**Lomé, Togo, May 28, 2018:** In line with the African Union's (AU) efforts to ensure that African countries fully implement key measures needed for the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) to operate effectively, its 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Working Group Meeting kicked off in Lomé, Togo today, with participants renewing their commitment to implement the decision establishing the SAATM and to harmonize all Bilateral Air Services Agreements (BASAs) to ensure the removal of any restrictions that run counter to the

Yamoussoukro Decision.

The meeting will take stock of the implementation status of the SAATM and explore ways to accelerate the harmonization of air service agreements between the Member States of the single market. Furthermore, the meeting will provide a platform for Member States that do not currently have any air service agreements, to conclude Yamoussoukro Decision-compliant BASAs as appropriate.

In his opening remarks the AU Commission Chairperson H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat expressed his pleasure to be part of this important project of Agenda 2063. He expressed his gratitude towards the personal commitment 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 in the development of this sector, which is a major asset for the regional integration.



H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat said that the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) was the first of the thirteen Agenda 2063 flagship projects, considered priority for continental economic integration, to be launched in January 2018, during the 31<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Summit of AU Heads of State and Government. Other flagship Agenda 2063 flagship

projects include the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and the Free Movement of People and Goods and the African Passport.

H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat thanked the stakeholders present at the meeting such as The International Air Transport Association (IATA), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), The African Airlines Association (AFRAA), and the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), who all contributed to the operationalization of SAATM. The AUC Chairperson noted that the AU is seeking technical assistance for member states to improve the level of aviation safety and security to meet the minimum global requirements.

Finally, the AU Commission Chairperson commended the efforts of the Ministerial Working Group (MWG) in the development of a Roadmap of specific activities for both the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision and the establishment of the Single Market as well as the establishment of the Dispute Settlement Mechanism. He further urged the MWG to spearhead an advocacy campaign to urge the rest of the Member States to join the single market and to encourage them to abide by provisions of Yamoussoukro Decision. The AU Chairperson reiterated the commitment of the African Union fast track this important continental initiative. Chairperson Faki called on the African Development Bank and other funding partners to expedite resource mobilization efforts towards the full operationalization of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM).

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 Essozimna Gnassingbé. The minister encouraged all Member States to join the current 26 African countries who are already members of the SAATM, by adhering to the Solemn Commitment to the establishment of the single market. In his capacity as Champion, President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé urged for a more robust advocacy campaign to sensitise and the unique opportunity that the Single African Air Transport Market offers for the development of African economies and citizens.

The main outcomes of the Ministerial Working Group meeting 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) Memorandum of Implementation harmonisation of BASAs and operationalization of the SAATM is signed;
- d) Appointment of a new Bureau of the Ministerial Working Group.

The new Bureau of the Ministerial Working Group is composed of the Republic of Mali as the Chairperson, the Republic of Rwanda as the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Chairperson, the Central African Republic as 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chairperson and South Africa as the Rapporteur.

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.

## **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 liberalization 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.

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, Capo 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.

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