

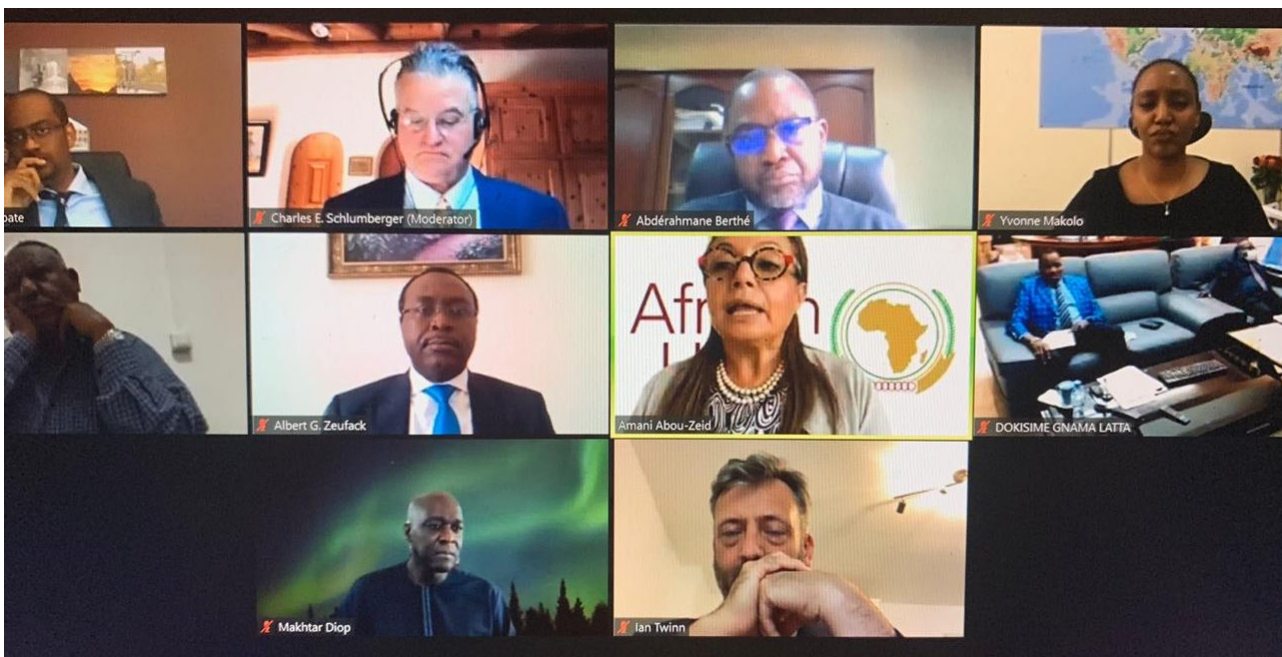
DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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How can the African air transport sector bounce back?



“Recovery of aviation is essential to rapid and sustainable recovery of Africa economies post-COVID19. Restoring confidence, stimulating demand, consistency and harmonization in applying health measures, as well as innovation are building blocks for successful restart” stated H.E. Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy at the opening of the High-Level Webinar on African Aviation in the Aftermath of COVID-19.

The webinar aimed at exploring strategies to build back a safe, secure and competitive air transport sector while highlighting the role of development partners like the World Bank. The Commissioner was joined by topnotch industry leaders and government officials, notably the Honorable Pravin J. Gordhan Minister of Public Enterprises of South Africa, Mr Makhtar Diop, the World Bank Vice President for Infrastructure, Mr. Abderahmane Berthé, the Secretary General of the African Airlines Association, among others.

According to the AU Commissioner, the COVID-19 Pandemic has resulted in unprecedented downturn in air transport activity risking economies and livelihoods dependent on travel and tourism. “As countries begin to open their economies and assess the damage from the pandemic, our focus at the AU is to advise governments on best approaches for air transport sector to bounce back and contribute to rapid recovery.” said Dr Amani Abou-Zeid.

The discussion focused on the regional strategic approach led by the African Union in support to African countries and the entire aviation industry to ensure acceptable levels of safety, security, efficiency and maintain jobs while ensuring public confidence in air travel during and post COVID-19.

It is projected that African airports will experience revenue losses of 51% for the year 2020 due to restrictions still in place on aviation activities, with the loss estimated at USD 2.2 billion as per analysis released by Airport Council International (ACI). Airlines estimates total losses in revenues are at USD 6 billion and have faced a severe cash burn compounded by the serious liquidity issues.

“It is clear that an uncoordinated opening of aviation infrastructure to facilitate seamless aviation economic activities across AU States compounded with the application of different quarantine measures are neither practical means nor supporting policy tools to sustain jobs, secure the welfare of aviation professionals and restore aviation back or reasonably closer to pre-COVID19 levels.” added Commissioner Abou-Zeid

The Commissioner also presented the roadmap for recovery and the work conducted by the High Level Task Force (HLTF) coordinated by Africa CDC, African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and its main recommendations to recover and restart aviation economic activities meaningfully in a way that is beneficial to everyone on the demand or supply side.

Commissioner Abou-Zeid called upon all partners to mobilize resources for the relief and recovery initiatives across the Continent. She stressed the need for African governments and regional organizations to review their aviation master plans to account for current and emerging challenges, provide for risk-based scenario planning, and enhance resilience of aviation systems and to clearly set sustainability targets for their aviation sector.

In the same context, Dr Bernard Aliu, former President of the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) said “African aviation industry should not plan for a return to its pre-COVID past but rather chart a course to a profitable and sustainable future!”

The success of recovery efforts will largely depend on regaining the confidence of passengers in the adequacy and efficacy of the new health measures implemented at airports and in national borders.

Find more information about the partnership between Africa CDC, AFCAC, and ICAO and AFCAC @ <https://africacdc.org/download/saving-lives-economies-and-livelihoods-in-africa/>

For media inquiries, please contact:

1. Mrs. Wynne Musabayana | Head of Communication Division| Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: MUSABAYANAW@africa-union.org |
2. Mr. Gamal Ahmed A. Karrar | Senior Communication Officer| Directorate of Information and Communication, African Union Commission | E-mail: GamalK@africa-union.org

For further information contact

Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | **E-mail:** DIC@africa-union.org | **Website:** www.au.int | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia

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