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DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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AFRICA/MIDDLE EAST AIR TRANSPORT VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM

H.E. Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure & Energy delivered the keynote speech to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Africa/Middle East Air Transport Virtual Symposium, held on 30 August 2021 under the theme “Promoting and harnessing the benefits of liberalisation”.

In her speech, Commissioner Abou-Zeid highlighted the African Union Commission’s efforts to support African air transport industry during the severe crisis due to COVID-19 pandemic, to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to position the aviation sector on a path to restart and recover sustainability.

The AU Commissioner also acknowledged the joint efforts of the AU Ministers of Transport and Health for the roll out of the “Saving lives, saving economies and livelihoods” campaign towards harmonizing pre-entry and exit requirements, to increase mutual recognition, cross-border information exchange and for cross-collaboration between different sectors and stakeholders.

“The AU Taskforce on safe reopening of borders is also working on harmonizing the existing digital platforms for traveler health credentials and border requirements – the AU Trusted Traveler Platform and the IATA Travel Pass. It is also important to ensure that the adopted platforms are interoperable and are recognized by other regions to address the issue of restrictions to travel within or out of Africa. On this note, the AUC is urging Governments to continue to provide timely and accurate updates on their health protocols or requirements and to continue to provide digital COVID-19 test/vaccination certificates for citizens who get tested.” said Dr Abou-Zeid, while urging African Union Member States to join and use these platforms.

She recalled the excellent collaboration with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), notably the ICAO African Group, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) and others for the support given to Member States in the implementation of continental and global recovery strategies for the air transport sector.

She further underlined the operationalization of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) as key priority to ensure sustainable restart and recovery of the industry and also to improve air transport connectivity in support of the African Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

“I am glad to inform you that AUC just concluded a continental study on the benefits of SAATM which will serve as an advocacy tool to urge remaining states to join SAATM. The revised Windhoek targets on aviation security and facilitation as well as

the recommendations of air transport cost in Africa through the reduction of taxes and charges have been adopted by the 3rd Session of the STC meeting of Ministers of Transport and Energy held towards end of June. It is my hope that all the efforts being made in the areas of safety, security and facilitation will continue to focus on improving passenger travel experience and will help to rebuild confidence to travel within and outside Africa in a cost effective way, for the sustainable recovery of the African air transport industry.” added Commissioner Abou-Zeid

She stressed the need of enhanced collaboration to support the industry into a better and sustainable recovery, post-COVID.

The AU Commissioner reiterated the call upon all participants and institutions to share their experiences and agree on concrete measures, in building support of aviation recovery and development.

The symposium gathered over 220 African and Middle Eastern aviation leaders and was attended by the ICAO Secretary General Mr. Juan Carlos Salazar as well as key policy makers, air transport regulators, industry representatives, aviation professionals and other aviation stakeholders in Africa and the Middle East regions.

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