

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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COMMISSIONER ABOU-ZEID MEETS PRESIDENT GNASSINGBE TO DISCUSS ON SAATM



H. E. Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy was received, on 15th September 2021, by the President of the Togolese Republic H.E Mr. Faure ESSOZIMNA GNASSINGBE to discuss progress in the operationalization of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) and the

needed actions to support the recovery of the African air transport industry during and after COVID-19 pandemic.

During the meeting, H.E Faure ESSOZIMNA GNASSINGBE, President of Togo and Champion of SAATM, accompanied by the Togolese Minister of Transport, H.E. Mr Affoh Atcha-Dédji, the Director General of Togolese Civil Aviation Authority Col. Dokissime Gnana LATTA and the Special Advisor to the SAATM Champion Mr. Girma Wake, received updates from the Commissioner on the progress made in the implementation of the SAATM and the activities led by the AU Department of Infrastructure and Energy to ensure the restart and recovery of the African air transport sector.

The Commissioner provided updates on the number of States that have so far joined the SAATM as thirty five (35), the on-going domestication of the SAATM regulatory instruments and development of a continental study on the benefits of the SAATM for the 55 AU Member States which will support the advocacy efforts to urge remaining Member States to join and fully implement SAATM. The study demonstrated the wider social and economic impacts of liberalization for each member State such as passenger benefits, regional and continental connectivity, tourism, trade, investment, job creation, economic development and social mobility. The planned activities include the finalization of the Dispute Settlement Mechanism and the development of a seamless airspace and air navigation services architecture to support SAATM.

Commissioner Abou-Zeid further highlighted the challenges that are currently affecting a sustainable restart and recovery of the African air transport sector including the lack of harmonization of health protocols (entry requirements at airports, the cost of the PCR tests), slow pace in ensuring digitalization of health information, the high taxes and charges that contribute to the high cost of air transport and the issue of vaccine passports being imposed by some countries and regions as a pre-requisite for international travel. H.E Dr Amani Abou-Zeid emphasized the need to mobilize necessary financial resources to support the recovery of African airlines and the harmonization of the health protocols through the use of the AU trusted travel platform

The SAATM Champion appreciated the progress made in the implementation of SAATM and the great collaboration that characterized the African air transport stakeholders since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. He appreciated the leadership role that AUC provided to support the restart and recovery of the African air transport sector. President Gnassingbe pledged his support to the continental recovery efforts and reiterated his commitment to engage the remaining Member States to join SAATM.

The Commissioner also met Ms. Victoire Tomegah Dogbe, Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic and later with Hon. Minister Affoh Atcha-Dedji Minister of Transport together with Prof Moustafa Mijiyawa, Minister of Health. She congratulated Ms. Tomegah Dogbe for her recent appointment as the female Prime Minister of Togolese Republic and also congratulated Togo as the first country worldwide to have a high number of women in governance positions. H.E Commissioner later called on the Togolese Republic to implement ongoing and planned continental projects and programmes in the infrastructure, Energy and ICT sectors, including the planned continental e-Strategy that will assist in integrating digitalization in various socio-economic sectors with more focus on health and education.

During the meeting with the two Ministers of Transport and Health, H.E Commissioner called on Togo to join the AU Trusted Travel platform, an initiative led by the Africa CDC to facilitate the recording and exchange of COVID-19 test certificates and other health related information in a seamless and harmonized approach, to support the safe re-opening of borders for saving lives, economies and livelihoods. Both Ministers of Transport and Health confirmed their support to finalize the remaining process to join the platform and also work with other Member States to support AUC efforts to ensure harmonization of health protocols and the full operationalization of the AU trusted travel platform.

Note to the Editor

The Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) is the first flagship project of the AU Agenda 2063, launched officially during the 30th Assembly of Heads of State and Government in January 2018, It is expected to facilitate the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area, boost inter African trade, stimulate job creation and enhance connectivity as well as tourism on the continent, therefore contributing to the achievement of the integration agenda of the African Union.

The COVID-19 pandemic considerably affected the African air transport industry (Airlines, air navigation service providers, airports and Civil Aviation Authorities) and national economies at large. This negatively impacted the operationalization of SAATM and drastically reduced intra-Africa air transport connectivity which is needed especially to support the transportation of vaccines, health and pharmaceutical products (According to recent data from IATA, air connectivity in Africa has reduced due to COVID-19 from 907 city pairs in April 2019 to 100 city pairs April 2020).

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