

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE AIR TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 19 February 2023 – The African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) organised a high-level roundtable session on Sustainable Development of Air Transport in Africa on the margins of the 36th African Union (AU) Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 19th February 2023.

The hybrid event was attended by Ministers of the AU Member States, the AU High Representative for Infrastructure Development in Africa, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), African Airlines Association (AFRAA), International Air Transport Association (IATA), Director Generals of Civil Aviation, African Airline Service Operators, private sector companies, other air transport institutions, partners and the media.

In her opening remarks, AUC Infrastructure and Energy Commissioner H.E. Dr Amani Abou-Zeid recalled the hiccups the aviation sector has gone through over the past three years due to the fast-changing global dynamics. The Commissioner highlighted that the growth of the air transport sector underpins the realisation of the aspirations of the AU Agenda 2063. *“The contribution of sustainable air transport to the attainment of integrated, peaceful and prosperous Africa cannot be overstated. It facilitates the free movement of people, goods and services while hastening AfCFTA & creating decent jobs.”*

“A digitalised, sustainable, agile and resilient aviation industry is a driving force for Africa’s socio-economic development. We need to rethink the way we do aviation in Africa” added Dr Abou-Zeid.

Soaring aviation fuel prices continue to put African airlines under strain. This necessitates alternative sources of aviation fuels mainly the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) to ensure competitiveness in addition to enhancing efforts to decarbonise the industry by contributing to a 65% reduction in GHG emissions by 2050.

The limited availability of SAF in the African market and the fact that Africa is yet to expand production will however hamper the uptake of SAF in the continent’s aviation industry.

African Union High Representative for Infrastructure Development Honourable Raila Odinga who made his interventions virtually pressed on the need to speedily liberalise air transport services in Africa by fully implementing the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM). *“SAATM helps reduce the risks and costs associated with intra-regional trade while opening up more trade routes and opportunities for doing business across the continent.”*

The session discussed challenges affecting the growth of the air transport sector in Africa including the full implementation of SAATM such as protectionism, high taxes & charges and visa restrictions among others. In her scene-setting presentation, the Secretary General of AFCAC and moderator of the side-event Ms Adefunke Adeyemi talked about the recently launched SAATM Pilot Implementation Project (PIP) which aims at accelerating SAATM implementation.

H.E. Mokhele Shelile, Minister of Trade of the Kingdom of Lesotho said governments can stimulate air transport demand and double their revenues by removing taxes on air transport and reducing passenger charges.

The Acting Executive Secretary of UNECA Antonio Pedro underscored the importance of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision (YD), one of AU’s bold steps to fully open African skies. *“ECA will continue to support AFCAC to assess gaps in the implementation of YD in Member States,”* said Mr Pedro.

Road, Air and Rail Transport Minister of the Togolese Republic, the Champion Member State of the SAATM, said there is a need for enhanced collaboration and coordination as well as financial and technical support to the civil aviation sector.

The Forum concluded with strong recommendations of Commissioner Dr Amani Abou-Zeid for a comprehensive continental study on the development and deployment of Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) in Africa.

Notes to the Editor:

About SAATM:



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.

The Declaration on the establishment of a Single Africa Air Transport Market, as a flagship project of the AU Agenda 2063 was adopted by the African Union (AU) Assembly in 2015 to expedite the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) of 1999 that provides a framework liberalisation in terms of market access between African States, the free exercise of traffic rights, the elimination of restrictions on ownership and the full liberalization of frequencies, fares, and capacities.

Benin, Burkina Faso, Botswana, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Eswatini, Togo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe are the countries that signed the Solemn Commitment of SAATM.

For more information on the regulatory instruments of YD and SAATM please visit www.saatmbenefits.org

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