



SINGLE AFRICAN AIR TRANSPORT MARKET (SAATM) AWARENESS WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTION

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Secretariat and the European Union (EU) have signed a Grant Contribution Agreement amounting to €8 million for the Support to Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO) Region. The overall objective of the programme is to contribute to the sustainable development of the air transport sector in the EA-SA-IO region. The specific objectives are to achieve the following:

- Single African Air Transport Market operationalised.
- Strengthened regulatory and institutional capacity of civil aviation institutions in EA- SA-IO region; and
- Improved air navigation efficiency in the EA-SA-IO region.

To achieve the above specific objectives, SATSD is undertaking various studies and activities.

BACKGROUND

Air transport is an essential component of the global society, a crucial driver of economic, social and cultural development. It has become an indispensable means of transport, providing a worldwide transportation network, creating jobs and facilitating trade and tourism. Air connectivity and infrastructural development have been identified by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) as means of contributing to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 of decent work and economic growth and SDG 9 of industry, innovation and infrastructure. Air transport is a preferred mode of transport for international tourism as convenient air service facilitates tourism in a region or country. Achieving sustainable economic development in Africa is highly dependent on the development of air transport and enhancement of air connectivity with the continent.

Although air transport has grown faster than most other industries, doubling in size every fifteen years, the sector is still facing regulatory barriers, constraints, uncertainty and/or economic fragmentation, which impede efficiency, generate frictions and hinder air connectivity improvement. Harnessing and maximising the benefits of air transport requires enabling regulatory environments and quality infrastructure commensurate with the level of predicted traffic growth. Air transport policies and regulations should aim to facilitate transformation and new technologies. Efforts in this respect must focus on the liberalization of market access and the establishment of good regulatory practices and governance for air transport, including modernization, harmonization and convergence of regulatory approaches and regimes of States, and the promotion of connectivity, competition, transparency and choice for consumers.

CONCEPT NOTE

While many air transport markets within Africa and outside of Africa have been liberalized to a significant extent, most intra-African air transport markets remain largely closed due to restrictive Bilateral Air Services Agreements (BASAs). This has affected air connectivity within Africa and has limited the potential of air transport as an engine of economic growth and development.

In 1988, African Ministers responsible for Civil Aviation, adopted a new air transport policy whose aim was to gradually liberalise the air transport activities within Africa. Recognising the relevance of the objective of the Yamoussoukro Declaration and realising the non-binding nature of the Declaration, the African Ministers responsible for Civil Aviation, agreed to adopt the Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) in 1999. Implementation of YD among some Member States has realised enormous economic benefits by increasing the frequencies of air transport services and reduction of air fares between a number of city pairs. It is on this basis that the African Union decided that implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision should be elevated to the more ambitious and ultimate goal of establishing a Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) by 2017.

SAATM was launched on 28-29 January 2018 during the 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It provides for the full liberalisation of intra-African air transport services in terms of market access, traffic rights for scheduled and freight air services by eligible airlines thereby improving air services connectivity and air carrier efficiencies. It removes restrictions on ownership and provides for the full liberalisation of frequencies, tariffs and capacity. It also provides eligibility criteria for African community carriers, ensures safety and security standards, providing a mechanism for fair competition and dispute settlement as well as consumer protection.

Since its launch in 2018, 36 Member States have signed the Solemn Commitment to establish the SAATM. Of the 19 Member States that have not signed the Solemn Commitment, 16 States are in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Region. One of the factors contributing to the slow take-up of the Decision's principles is a lack of clear and specific information regarding the impacts and potential benefits of enacting or implementing such liberalisation. While there is a growing body of evidence on the impacts of air service liberalisation generally, these have largely focused on the experience in Europe and North America, and there is less research on its impacts and potential benefits in Africa. Accordingly, AUC in 2021 commissioned a study to close this gap. The Continental Study on the Benefits of the SAATM and Communication Strategy for SAATM Advocacy undertaken in 2021 developed credible resources to support the advocacy efforts of the AU and other relevant stakeholders on implementation of the SAATM.

The purpose of the workshop is to complement AU and AFCAC and other stakeholders to encourage the remaining non-SAATM States to join the SAATM and fully implement it.

Expected Outcomes

The following are the expected outcomes of the workshops:

- i) A clear understanding of the benefits of SAATM.
- ii) A clear understanding of the regulatory and institutional framework of YD and operationalisation of SAATM.
- iii) An understanding the challenges faced by Member States in the implementation of YD and operationalization of SAATM.
- iv) Identify other measures necessary to fast track the implementation of YD and operationalisation of SAATM.
- v) More Member States signing the Solemn Commitment to join SAATM.

CONCEPT NOTE

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Technical experts from the ministries, agencies, departments, and other air transport stakeholders responsible for the formulation and implementation of the air transport policy, negotiation and implementation of the Bilateral Air Services Agreements and implementation of the liberalization of air transport services and Yamoussoukro Decision or undertake activities or functions that are related to or impact air transport services.

Dates and Venue

This workshop will be conducted over a three (3) day period from 06th– 08th November 2023 in St. Louis, Mauritius.