



Remarks of the Secretary General of the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) Ms. Iyabo O. Sosina, at the 47th African Airlines Association (AFRAA) Annual General Assembly (AGA)

I am excited to be here for the first time in Brazzaville in the Republic of Congo, and I am happy to join you on this occasion of the 47th AFRAA Annual General Assembly. I want to thank the government and people of the Republic of Congo for their warm hospitality since our arrival, and the management of ECAir led by my friend Mrs Fatima Beyina-Moussa for hosting this event. I wish to particularly thank the Honourable Minister of Transport of the Republic of Congo who has been extremely supportive of AFCAC and has constantly encouraged its activities as the Executing Agency of the Yamoussoukro Decision.

AFCAC applauds AFRAA and its dynamic and progressive leadership under my friend, brother and worthy partner, Elijah Chingosho for its initiative in gathering together industry stakeholders to discuss the theme "Open skies: Growth through Competition and Collaboration".

The recent years you will agree have witnessed extensive air transport liberalization, especially in the markets of Europe and North America. Within the bilateral framework of international air transport, countries have opened up their markets, leading to more airlines on routes. They have also relaxed or abolished capacity/frequency restrictions leading to more competition among and between airlines and the lowering of costs while the populace has benefitted from the reduction in air fares and better services. There has also been the rise of low-cost carriers, which has further stimulated air travel.

The topic of this AGA could not have been more apt given the fact that our continent is now focusing on the development of the African Union Agenda 2063 and the Solemn Commitment of African Union member States with respect to the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision on establishing a Single Air Transport Market in Africa by 2017. As you know, AFCAC is the Executing Agency of the Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) and has the tremendous responsibility of bringing to fruition, this single market between now and June 2017.

I am therefore personally looking forward to the outcomes of this gathering of industry experts and practitioners and looking for specific ideas that may assist AFCAC in its specific task as it has already taken some key steps to kick-start the concretization of the Solemn Commitment through the immediate commencement of full implementation of the YD (1999) and the establishment of the Single African Air Transport Market.

As this issue is of benefit mostly to the airline industry, it is necessary for me to take a few minutes of your time to talk about the work that AFCAC is currently doing on this important task in line with the Activity Roadmap (2015-2017) developed by the Ministerial Working Group tasked with overseeing the realization of this assignment of the Establishment of a Single African Air Transport Market through the YD in April of this year.

To ensure the full Implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) and the actualisation of the Establishment of a Single African Air Transport Market by 2017 as well as fulfil the tasks assigned to it in the Ministerial Activity Road Map in line with the AU Agenda 2063, AFCAC has developed its own specific AFCAC Work/Action Plan. This Action Plan shows the short and medium term steps that AFCAC is expected to take from July to December, 2015 and from January 2016 to June 2017. In this regard, AFCAC has so far drafted a document on the concretisation of the Solemn Commitment through the immediate commencement of the full implementation of the YD and establishment of a Single African Air Transport Market. The document will serve as a blue print outlining the implementing steps for States that have already signed the Solemn Commitment and this has been forwarded to the AUC for review and immediate implementation.

As you are aware, the operational establishment of the Executing Agency of the YD is subsequent to the existence of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) established by the Abuja Treaty which have done a lot of work on the implementation of the YD and have set up some structures to manage the process on sub-regional bases . Therefore, AFCAC must properly manage this existential fact to ensure that it does not pose challenges to the smooth functioning of the Executing Agency. In this regard, AFCAC has drafted a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between it and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) providing a framework for enhanced cooperation, collaboration and coordination in the implementation of the YD 1999 and actualisation of the Single African Air Transport market by 2017. The MoC has also been sent to the African Union Commission (AUC) for consideration, review and immediate implementation by the concerned Parties.

Furthermore, AFCAC has drafted a proposal on collaboration in the training of African air transport Experts, Inspectors and Investigators for the Implementation of the YD and the realisation of the Single African Air Transport Market by 2017. The objective of this proposal is to seek collaboration on the funding and development of training programs to meet the needs of a liberalised single aviation market in Africa in the sphere of economic regulation and the application of consumer/competition regulations.

This training covers 2015-2018 and it will be for National Senior Management, National Inspectors, National/Regional Inspectors, National Investigators, AFCAC staff, members of the African Tribunal and the members of the RECs Tribunals. The proposal also identified the staffing needs of AFCAC in order to increase the capacity of AFCAC to meet its mandate especially when it comes to fulfilling its duties as an Executing Agency of the YD 1999.

The other documents submitted by AFCAC to the AUC for consideration and review for immediate implementation include the Proposal for Rule Making on the YD and the Rule Making Procedure.

I really want to thank AFRAA for the opportunity to make these few remarks. If you recall, I stood here about a year ago to inform you about the approval of the Regulatory Instruments of the YD by the Heads of States namely: the Legal Powers and Functions of the Executing Agency; Dispute Settlement Mechanism; Rules and Procedures relating to Competition; and Consumer Protection Regulations, all of which were arrived at with the active participation of our partners and collaborators AFRAA, ICAO and IATA. From your standpoint, it may seem as if the pace of implementing these regulations is slow, however, you must remember that if the paperwork for managing a process is not properly prepared and properly implemented, it will lead to chaos in the system and will defeat the purpose for which they were developed and approved. We have waited a long time for the YD to be implemented to the benefit of all players in the continent and when the process fully takes off, it must be smooth.

Thus, AFCAC and AFRAA must continue to work together and work with its partners especially ICAO and IATA in this project YD to make Africa a thriving centre of aviation. Evidently, without the collaboration and support of all stakeholders, the success of the Executing Agency will be limited. In view of this, I wish to use this opportunity to appeal to the airlines present here to urge their States to support the activities of the Executing Agency on the YD because as I said before, the airlines stand to benefit the most from the full implementation of the YD, followed by the Airports and Air Navigation Service Providers. States must also address the indirect barriers that have negative impact on liberalization, such as visa and work permit restrictions and procedures and they must also provide adequate cost-efficient infrastructure to meet the growing demand among others.

On this note, I thank you for your attention and wish us all a very successful AGA.