

The IGAD opening remarks

The Chief Guest, the Director General of Civil Aviation Authority of Uganda, representatives of Member States, COMESA, AFCAC, IATA, ICAO, EAC, the media present, all protocols observed. My name is Dr Zacharia Kingori, the IGAD Infrastructure Coordinator representing the Executive Secretary of IGAD.

On behalf of the Executive Secretary of Intergovernmental Authority on Development – IGAD, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, let me take this opportunity to:

Thank Government of the Republic of Uganda for the hospitality and hosting this important meeting in a beautiful environment.

Thank participants for attending the capacity building workshop on the support review of national laws, rules, regulations and policies to conform with the provisions of the Yamoussoukro Decision (annex 6-consumer protection regulations).

Thank COMESA for organizing this workshop on Support to Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) in the EA-SA-IO regions, on behalf of other Regional Economic Communities (RECs) including IGAD, SADC, EAC and IOC.

The Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) aims to liberalize Africa's air transport market, and is the originator of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) which is a flagship project of the African Union's Agenda 2063. As you all are aware, the SAATM, which the Support to Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) is working for adoption in the EA-SA-IO region, has several benefits, including:

Economic Benefits

- **Boost to Trade and Tourism:** Enhanced connectivity can significantly increase trade and tourism.
- **Job Creation:** Expansion of air transport services creates jobs in aviation and related industries.
- **Cost Reduction:** Increased competition among airlines can lower airfares and reduce business costs.

Social Benefits

- **Improved Connectivity:** Better air connectivity improves personal mobility and quality of life.
- **Access to Remote Areas:** Enhanced air services improve access to essential services in remote regions.

Operational Benefits

- **Harmonization of Policies:** Promotes more efficient and safer air transport operations.
- **Capacity Building:** Facilitates the sharing of best practices and expertise.

Strategic Benefits

- **Enhanced Global Competitiveness:** Helps African airlines achieve economies of scale.
- **Increased Investment:** Attracts investment from both domestic and international investors.

Environmental Benefits

- **Efficient Use of Resources:** More efficient use of resources and reduced environmental impact.

Political Benefits

- **Regional Integration:** Reinforces political and economic ties, contributing to an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa.

On the theme of this workshop – consumer protection, we realise that the YD/SAATM can benefit consumers by increasing competition, leading to better services, lower prices, and more choices. However, this liberalization also necessitates the protection of consumer rights, such as those related to flight cancellations, delays, and lost baggage. Increased competition can improve service quality, but strong regulatory oversight is needed to ensure airlines comply with safety and competition rules. Challenges include the need for regulatory harmonization across Africa, capacity building for effective regulation, and consistent enforcement of consumer protection rights.

Therefore, it is our expectation as a region that this capacity building workshop will equip the participants with requisite knowledge and information on Consumer Protection in Air Transport. The knowledge acquired will go a long way in ensuring that national, regional and continental air transport laws and regulations protect the consumer. As they say, consumer is king, and air transport travellers should receive best services and protected from unscrupulous players in the market. The air transport sector should be secure, efficient and cost effective to all stakeholders.

Ethiopia and Kenya from the IGAD region have signed up to SAATM. We urge other Member States to consider joining SAATM. In this way, the region will enjoy the benefits of a liberalized air transport market, and contribute towards continental integration and socio-economic development.

Finally, I wish the participants fruitful participation in the workshop. Thank you.