



**Statement by the Secretary General
of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
Dr. Fang Liu,
to the African Union's (AU)
Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) Day Event**

(Virtual presentation, 13 Nov 2020)

1. I wish to extend my gratitude to the Secretary General Tefera Mekonnen Tefera of AFCAC for inviting me to address you on this auspicious occasion.
2. Before we begin to appreciate together the significant diplomatic and economic accomplishment that is the Yamoussoukro Decision, we must first acknowledge that COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc on domestic and international connectivity, and on the many countries and operators who made it possible.
3. The pandemic's aviation impacts have imperiled businesses large and small, many of them here in Africa.
4. And worldwide the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people have been placed in jeopardy, because of how it has disconnected us from our skies, and from each other.
5. While COVID-19 has been significantly more severe than any previous downturn in the global movement of people and goods, we must remember that international aviation has a very long and accomplished past, and that it will have a much longer and even more exciting future.
6. There is therefore a clear onus, on both public and private stakeholders, to take full measure of the dire circumstances now facing their air transport sectors, and to ensure sufficient operational sustainability.
7. These actions are critical to ensure that aviation will be ready to reconnect our world again, and lift it into global economic recovery.
8. And they are just as urgently needed to assure the realization of the goals of both AU Agenda 2063, and UN Agenda 2030, for increased and sustainable development, greater prosperity for all, and the accelerated integration of Africa's economies.

9. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, African aviation was poised to become one of the fastest growing air transport markets in the world.
10. Your overall sector supported some seven million jobs, and generated over 72 billion dollars each year in gross domestic product (GDP) on this continent.
11. To help restore these significant and positive benefits to African prosperity, current priorities should focus on the establishment of effective contingency policies and regulations.
12. To aid and manage the development of those measures, on an aligned global basis, the ICAO Council established an aviation Recovery or 'CART' Task Force which issued special pandemic Take-Off Guidelines.
13. These Take-Off provisions were fully endorsed in June, by the AU Commission High Level Task Force on the Restart and Recovery of Aviation in Africa, and their new Phase II revisions have also just been endorsed by the ICAO Council.
14. I encourage your states and industry to familiarize themselves with the new Phase II guidance, which covers such areas as general hygiene, masks, health screening and declarations, air passengers with reduced mobility, and the mental health and well-being of aviation workers and passengers.
15. The Phase II guidelines also include new references to risk mitigation measures applicable to aviation sectors other than commercial air transport, such as air traffic control, and general and business aviation.
16. Specific attention in the Phase II Guidelines has also been aimed at helping countries assess testing options as a means to alleviate quarantine measures, as local medical factors permit.
17. Looking ahead, aviation will be relying on aviation and public health authorities to work closely together to determine a prudent balance between testing and quarantine approaches, and to make use of the new *ICAO Manual on Testing and Cross Border Risk Management Measures* when doing so.
18. The manual will be finalized in a matter of days thanks to the close collaboration of the WHO and others, and should be available to all States and stakeholders soon after.

19. I would also encourage African countries' proactive pursuit of these measures in the context of Public Health Corridor and other near-term travel bubble solutions, as these can increase public confidence in air travel even further.
20. The ICAO State Letter we published in September provides extensive information to States on how to establish these corridors, and important advice for countries on how to promote the mutual recognition of public health measures through bilateral and multilateral agreements.
21. We must also be ready to be able to effectively move vaccines around the world by air when the time comes, even despite all of the challenges now being confronted by air operators.
22. A last pandemic-related point I wish to make is also very relevant to why we've come together here today.
23. It refers to the fact that ICAO traffic data is revealing that regions which feature higher levels of intra-regional traffic will recover more quickly.
24. We are seeing this playing out now in the Asia-Pacific, and it goes without saying that the more comprehensive realization of the Yamoussoukro Decision, notably through increased participation by States in the Single Africa Air Transport Market (SAATM), will accelerate these dynamics here in Africa.
25. This flagship project of the African Union Agenda 2063, designed to advance the liberalization of air transport and act as an impetus to the continent's economic integration agenda, will also ensure that aviation can fulfil its potential in connecting Africa, promoting its social, economic and political integration, and boosting intra-Africa trade and tourism.
26. Just as our current collaboration and coordination on the aviation response to COVID-19 is slowly beginning to reconnect our world, Africa's commitments to a Single African Sky will connect this continent and assure the growth and prosperity of its countries and communities.
27. I wish to therefore express my sincere appreciation for the Project Implementation Agreement (PIA) between ICAO and AFCAC which will be formalized shortly.

28. It sets out provisions of the Institutional Support Project financed by the African Development Fund (ADF), and will help accelerate SAATM implementation by providing targeted and measurable assistance to applicable States.
29. These objectives, and the others we share under the AFI Plan, AFI SECFAL Plan, and other agreements which align and improve our joint efforts, will further rely on the effective implementation of technical assistance programmes to address aviation safety, security, and environmental protection outcomes.
30. In concluding now, please let me once again express ICAO's deep appreciation to the AU Commission and AFCAC, and to all of Africa's aviation stakeholders for their continued support.
31. There is tremendous promise and a bright future ahead for African aviation, no matter the challenges now being faced.
32. Events such this reassure me of your international solidarity and commitment, and ICAO remains your dedicated partner on this journey.
33. Thank you.