



REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

**SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE ICAO/AFCAC SYMPOSIUM
ON MONDAY 17 AUGUST, 2009, IMPERIAL ROYALE, KAMPALA**

BY

HON JOHN NASASIRA

MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND WORKS

My colleague the Ministers of State

The President of the International Civil Aviation Organisation

The President of Africa Civil Aviation Commission

The Director ICAO Air Transport Bureau

Directors General of CAAs

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

I warmly welcome the President of ICAO, Mr. Roberto Kobeh Gonzalez, who I believe, is visiting Uganda for the first time. I also wish to extend our brotherly salutations to the President of the African Civil Aviation Commission, Mr. Charles Wako, and all the delegations from Africa, Canada and other countries.

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Uganda feels very privileged to host this important Symposium.

As a landlocked country, every effort in which we can participate to develop air transport is taken seriously by the government and people of Uganda.

Uganda's earliest recorded commercial air operation was around 1929, when the colonial State contracted air operators based in Kenya to deliver mail at Port Bell, on the shores of Lake Victoria. The flying boats operated by Wilson Airways heralded the growth of air transport in this country.

By independence in 1962, Uganda was a member of the E.A. Directorate of Civil Aviation and an active player in the growth of the industry in E. Africa.

Later the country became a contracting member State of ICAO and has since played, and will continue to strongly support ICAO plans and programmes.

The Symposium theme revolves around the economics of Airports and Air Navigation Services. I find the theme very appropriate given the challenges of the time. With the global economy struggling to emerge from the credit crunch, it is important for a sector that plays a pivotal role in that economy to consider the economics of the vital areas of Airports and Air Navigation Services.

Africa in general and Uganda in particular need to re-examine the financial performance of our Airports and Air Navigation Services. The level to which the ICAO policies on charges for Airports and Air Navigation Services

are implemented should be given critical assessment. Often times Africa's Airports are accused of being expensive and as a result, unattractive to international air operators. There is a need to examine what is responsible for this imbalance? With a fast-changing technological regime and increasing demands for upgrading facilities and equipment, can Africa provide services at the same cost with countries that run stronger economies? Will the implementation of the Yamousskro Decision help Africa to address the financial and operational deficiencies experienced in providing acceptable Airport and Air Navigation services? I want to believe that the Kampala recommendations will provide some answers to these and other questions that are holding back the speedy growth of air transport on our continent.

Mr. President,

I have had the opportunity to attend the ICAO General Assembly in Montreal at which I realized the seriousness with which the global organization addresses issues of aviation safety and facilitation, among others.

Uganda was also, as recently as November 2008 and February 2009, a participant in the Organisation's Safety and Security Audit programmes.

The depth and breath to which the Audits assessed our systems in Uganda were very revealing. The Audit programmes have radically changed ICAO's role from the standards setting body to a proactive international regulator. I want to recognize the ICAO for the paradigm shift. As a global air safety

regulator, you can now set standards, monitor compliance and where found wanting, enforce adherence to the standards. I think this is a significant step in the right direction, which was why Uganda fully cooperated during the Audit programmes; and will continue to do so as a member of ICAO and as an interested party in ensuring a safe and well regulated and audited air transport system.

On the other hand, there is a growing conviction that Airports can and should operate as businesses. With the global air traffic growing at the pace we are witnessing today, the industry acknowledges that there is a real challenge of infrastructure expansion. Many Airports in Africa are operating at or close to capacity even with our low traffic. We need to develop and expand our Airport facilities urgently. This calls for funding arrangements which currently have no hard and fast rule. Can government Budgets bail our Airports out or should the Airports channel their inadequate revenues directly into infrastructure development?

A critical examination of the two options gives credibility to the argument that Airports can and should operate as business enterprises. There has emerged a new trend towards privatization, corporatization or basic commercialization of Airports. This trend is embraced differently around the world. It would however be useful for especially us in Africa to work towards a common approach especially under the auspices of our trading blocs like the East African Community, COMESA, ECOWAS and of course, with AFCAC as well.

It is also clear is that there is little prospect of a reversal in the thinking towards greater private financial participation.

Like their Airline customers, Airports will increasingly be required to operate in a competitive environment. The management and behavior of the economics of Airports and Air Navigation Services is therefore crucial to giving direction to the desirable expansion and growth of Africa's Airports in terms of their capacity to compete in the global civil aviation arena.

Mr. President,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to register Uganda's appreciation to ICAO and AFCAC for the crucial support extended to us over the years.

ICAO was not only instrumental in the establishment of the Civil Aviation Authority in Uganda, it has also continued to extend technical and financial assistance to develop our human resource and aeronautical infrastructure. A number of experts have been in the country and the region in general to assist with capacity building.

The recommendations made for the planned revamping of the East African Civil Aviation Academy at Soroti and the establishment of the EAC's Civil Aviation Safety and Security Oversight Agency, CASSOA, are some of the efforts that the government and people of Uganda wish to thank ICAO for. The election of Uganda to the ICAO Council is another positive development in our quest to play even a greater role in the global system.

I wish to pledge on behalf of the government of Uganda that everything within our means shall be put at the disposal of AFCAC and ICAO, because we believe challenges of development in air transport need concerted efforts.

I am aware of the Convention on International Civil Aviation which requires that international air transport services be established on the basis of equality of opportunity and operated soundly and economically. Uganda is an old convert of this requirement and the industry, like the national economy, was liberalized years back to enable fair participation. In step with the liberalization of the economy, the government has also provided an enabling environment for investment in the air transport industry. I wish to also use this opportunity to invite credible investors to consider investing in the industry in Uganda and in African in general. I am sure the discovery of oil in Uganda should be an incentive for investing in Uganda for we shall soon be able to overcome the challenge of the cost of aviation fuel.

I once again thank Mr. Gonzales and the entire ICAO for granting Uganda's request to host this important Symposium that will provide a forum for African States and stakeholders to exchange views and share experiences regarding the economics of Airports and Air Navigation Services. I am personally looking forward to your recommendations. As we all know, it is out of exchange of expertise knowledge like we anticipate in this forum that crucial recommendations are made, and necessary improvements realised.

As is captured in the preamble of the Chicago Convention, I strongly hope this Symposium will further foster that cooperation between nations and peoples upon which the peace of the world depends.

It is now my pleasure to open this Symposium and wish you a successful; and memorable stay in Uganda.

Thank you.