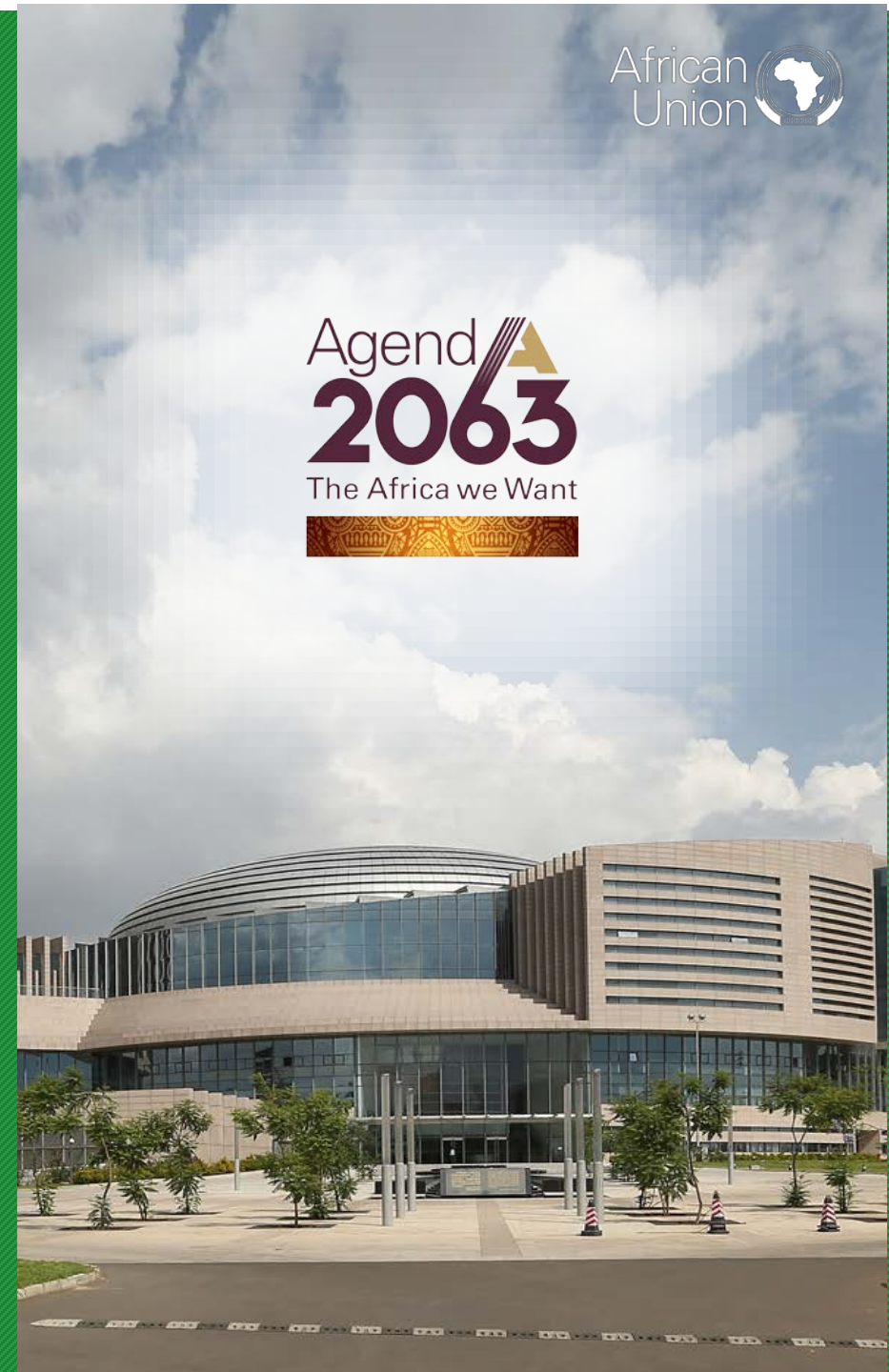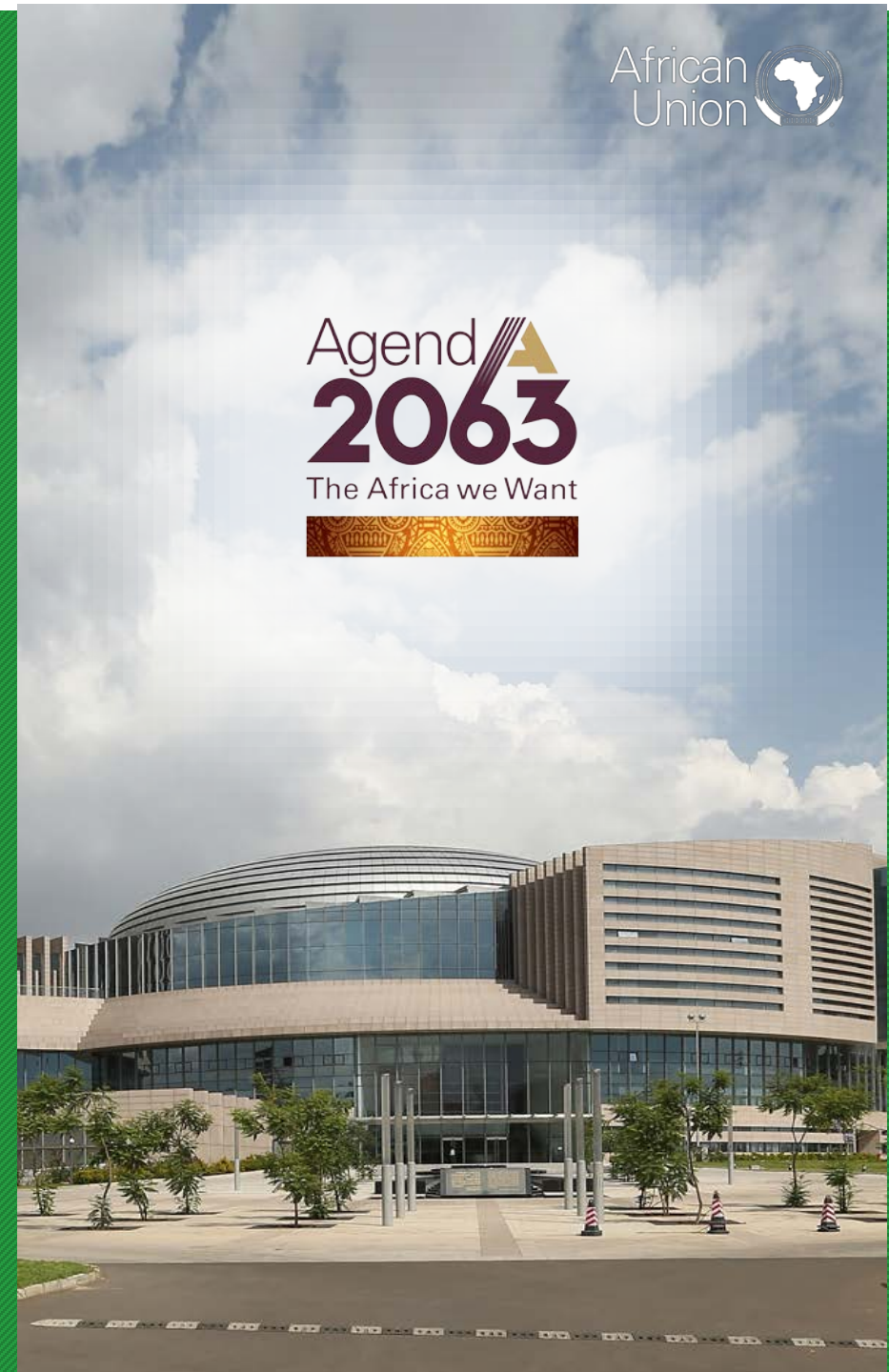# African Common Position Paper on Vaccine passport/certificates

Department of Infrastructure and Energy

Outline

❑ **Introduction**

❑ **Discussion**

❑ **Conclusion and call for action**

❑ **Implementation Roadmap**

Introduction-African Aviation Industry

▶ Aviation is a driver of socio-economic development. Aviation supports over **63 billion US dollars** in economic activity and **over 7 million** direct and indirect jobs in Africa according to the Air Transport Action Group (ATAG) report on Aviation benefits. In addition, aviation in Africa has the potential to open up markets, facilitate trade, link Africa to the rest of the world and contribute to the socio-economic integration and prosperity of the continent.

▶ The COVID-19 impact on African Civil aviation industry can be summarized as follows: **39 million international passengers carried in 2020** against **74 million in 2019** and **15 million passengers carried on domestic routes in 2020 against 41 million in 2019** as depicted by the ICAO's report on the Economic Impact Analysis of COVID-19 as at 10th March 2021. This translates into massive losses in revenues to the entire African aviation value chain – airlines, airports, ANSPs, States, etc.

▶ COVID-19 vaccines offer the hope of a return to pre-pandemic normality, for international travel it is important to establish a globally consistent and standardized approach to minimize complexity. This is particularly critical with regard to equivalent treatment of different vaccines and mutual recognition and acceptance of vaccination certificates.

Discussion

▶ The ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) Phase III notes that the COVID-19 crisis has required States to confront difficult trade-offs associated with health, economic and social challenges. The resources available in response to emergency needs are often limited and characterized by high political pressure and urgency.

▶ Like in other regions, African aviation is important and crucial in the fight against the pandemic. The global distribution of emergency and humanitarian supplies including the vaccines will no doubt depend on an economically viable aviation system. Aviation is also capable of stimulating recovery and growth of national economies by acting as an enabler and multiplier of economic activity.

▶ Considering that the global aviation industry operates as an interconnected ecosystem, it is therefore imperative that all the States of the world implement the ICAO CART Phase III recommendations and guidance, which are based on the latest development of the COVID-19 particularly on testing and vaccination.

▶ As well captured by the Preamble of the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention, 1944), there is an important need to develop international civil aviation to preserve friendship and understanding, reduce threat to general security and establish international air transport based on equal opportunity, operated soundly and economically.

Conclusion

▶ While Article 14 of the Chicago Convention states that each contracting State agrees to take effective measures to prevent spread of disease, it also stresses on the need for States to do so in close consultation with the concerned agencies.

▶ The ICAO CART, in the face of the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, has provided a framework for such consultations. Further, the ICAO CART Recommendation 19, particularly states that:

"Vaccination should not be a pre-requisite for international travel. At such time as evidence shows that vaccinated persons would not transmit the SARS-CoV-2 virus or would present a reduced risk of transmitting the virus"

▶ Member States could consider exempting such persons from testing and/or quarantine measures, in accordance with a State's accepted risk threshold, national framework, the COVID-19 situation and the multilayered risk mitigation framework described in the Take-off: Guidance for Air Travel through the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis

▶ ICAO CART also took into account the position of the World Health Organization (WHO) that "national authorities and conveyance operators should not introduce requirements of proof of COVID-19 vaccination for international travel as a condition for departure or entry" as detailed in the WHO Interim Position Paper of 5 February 2021

African Union

Conclusion and Call for action

Conclusion

▶ It is worth noting that the WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) Roadmap for Prioritizing uses of COVID-19 Vaccines in the Context of Limited Supply acknowledges that there is still a limited supply of vaccines and puts forward seven key assumptions regarding vaccines. This further strengthens the fact that vaccines are still not widely available to all world regions, particularly Africa.

▶ Should the requirement of proof of COVID-19 vaccination for international travellers be introduced in future in accordance with the International Health Regulations (IHR) provisions, vaccines must be approved by WHO, and be of suitable quality and universally available, for the protection of all people from international spread of disease (IHR Articles 31, 36, 40, 43 and Annexes 6 and 7). Currently, yellow fever is the only disease mentioned in the IHR for which countries can require proof of vaccination for international travellers (IHR Annex 7).

▶ It is also important to note that the African Union led initiative of Safe Reopening of Borders to Save Lives, Economies and Livelihoods in Africa has conducted detailed work including a call to action that recognizes that the COVID-19 vaccine rollout will be uneven in all 55 Member States, but conscious of the progress made in science on the same. The initiative involved AFCAC, AFRAA, WHO, ICAO, ACI-Africa, IATA and AFRO-Champions Initiative.

Call for action

▶ All Countries in the different World regions that have introduced and in the process of introducing vaccine passports as a pre-requisite for air travel refrain from doing so given that:

- So far, the vaccine has not been made widely available as confirmed by the WHO, and that the African Continent still has considerable number of its citizens who have not yet received the vaccines.

- Air crew are recognized globally as essential workers and play an important role in ensuring an unimpeded supply and transportation of essential goods, supplies and COVID19 vaccines and economic recovery to other sectors, dependent on its efficiency

- Such pre-conditions will impede access of licensed aviation safety- sensitive personnel to foreign-based medical training facilities, including flight simulation training devices which are geographically in limited supply, to maintain their certifications, recency of experiences and proficiency;

- Due to various personal reasons, some people are not yet willing to be vaccinated.

- Imposing vaccine passports as a compulsory prerequisite for travelling will amount to discrimination of certain group of population and goes against the intent of the Chicago Convention on the need to preserve friendship and understanding, reduce threat to general security and establish international air transport based on equal opportunity, operated soundly and economically.

African Union

Call for action

▶ All Countries to facilitate and prioritize the inclusion of air crew, frontline – aviation workers and aviation workers access to vaccination - in terms of Recommendation 18 (Vaccinations) of the ICAO CART III as quickly as possible - as another layer of the multilayer risk strategy that can be used to mitigate the effects of COVID-19, in line with WHO recommendations;

▶ Africa CDC and WHO-Africa to work with ICAO Regional Offices, AFCAC, AFRAA, IATA and other Regions to enhance the existing health protocols for COVID-19 in all African States in line with the recommendation of the ICAO CART guidance and specifically:

- ▪ Maintain the PCR test requirement for international travelers

- ▪ Consider antigen test as an alternative to the PCR if necessary as recommended by the Africa Task Force for Safe Re-Opening of Borders in the framework of the Africa Union Saving Lives, Livelihoods and Economies campaign rolled out jointly by the ministers in charge of health and transport.

- ▪ Ensure interoperability between the COVID-19 test/vaccine certificates used in Africa and those used in other regions

▶ All African States to implement Addenda Nos. 1 and 2 to the ICAO Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air (ICAO Doc 9284) without delay in order to facilitate the transport of COVID-19 vaccines and to permit certain dangerous goods to be carried on board aircraft to provide for a safe, sanitary operating environment for passengers and crew. If any State wishes to be more restrictive, they are reminded of their obligation to file a State variation to the Technical Instructions.

Call for action

▶ Urge African governments to embrace the use of digital technology such as the AU Trusted Traveler Platform and IATA Travel pass as a way to facilitate and verify passenger health credentials.

▶ To support these digital platforms, we call on African States to :

- Continue to provide timely and accurate updates of their health protocols or requirements

- Provide digital COVID-19 test/vaccination certificates for citizens who get tested

- Adopt digital test wherever possible as verifiable health credentials and as a trusted platform for traveler information.

- Ensure their respective airports have necessary infrastructure to accommodate the digital solution for testing and exchange of information

▶ All African States to support full implementation of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) as a strategy to re-open markets and ensure a sustainable restart and recovery of the African air transport industry

▶ All the above principles and recommendations that are adopted by the Air Transport sector, should apply to all modes of transport so that a harmonized continental regulatory framework relating to travellers making use of all modes of transport is established.

Implementation Roadmap

Short Term (April to December 2021)

▶ Present the african common position paper to AU Policy Organs (PRC, Joint meetings of Ministers of Health and Transport, Executive Council and Summit)

▶ Discuss the african position with EU Commissioner for Transport and present it at EU/AU Summit

▶ Implement the AU Call on action on Testing/other risk mitigation measures to reduce travel restrictions

▶ Ensure the access to vaccines by 60% of African population by 2022 (AU, african CDC, Member States)

▶ Ensure the interoperability between COVID-19 test/vaccination certificates   (Africa and other regions).

▶ Harmonization of health protocols

Implementation Roadmap

Medium Term(2021-2022)

▶ Digitalization – Issue secure and interoperable travel Pass including the AU trusted travel pass

▶ Equip airports with necessary infrastructure to accommodate the digital travel passes

▶ Provide digital COVID-19 test/vaccination certificates

▶ Vaccine Distribution and Roll out

▶ Ensure standardization of travel documents (Machine readable passports, IDs and test/vaccination certificates)

Longer Term- (2021-2024)

▶ Full Operationalization of SAATM, AfCFTA, Free movement Protocols (AU Agenda 2063)

▶ Improve air transport connectivity

▶ Enhanced coordination for public health measures through CAPSCA and ICAO CART recommendations

Thank you
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