

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



AFRICAN UNION

UNIÃO AFRICANA

P. O. Box 3243, Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA Tel.: (251-11) 5525849 Faxes: (251-11) 5525855
Website: www.africa-union.org

**SPEECH OF DR. ELHAM M.A. IBRAHIM, COMMISSIONER
FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY AT THE OPENING
OF THE EU-AFRICA AVIATION CONFERENCE**

02 APRIL 2009

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

**Speech of Dr. Elham M.A. IBRAHIM, African Union Commissioner
for Infrastructure and Energy, at the EU-Africa Aviation Conference,
Windhoek, Namibia, 2 April 2009**

- **Honourable, Helmut ANGULA, Minister of Works and Transport;**
- **Honourable British High Commissioner Mark Bensberg representative of the Presidency of the European Union;**
- **Honourable Ministers;**
- **Representatives of Specialized agencies;**
- **Distinguished Participants;**
- **Invited Guests;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

On behalf of His Excellency Jean PING, Chairperson of the African Union Commission and on my own behalf, I would like to convey to all of you greetings from the African Union and thank you for your massive response to our invitation to participate in the EU-Africa Aviation higher level meeting. It is, indeed, a great sight to see such a huge gathering of aviation stakeholders from Africa and Europe in the beautiful city of Windhoek in the effort to find a common ground and chart a shared aviation future for the two regions.

In that regard, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Namibia and, particularly, Honourable Helmut ANGULA, Minister of Works and Transport who is among us here today as our Host for making all this possible. The Government of

Namibia has been on the forefront in spearheading efforts to strengthen the aviation link between Africa and the European Union.

Also, I would like to sincerely thank the European Commission for the significant contribution and commitment it has made in facilitating our being here today in both technical and logistical terms.

Honourable Ministers

Ladies and Gentlemen

For those who are familiar with the work of the African Union (AU), would have already noted that air transport has been accorded the highest priority among all the transport modes. Three Ministerial conferences have been organised since the launching of the Union to this day compared to one each for each of the other transport sub-sectors. This may seem paradoxical given the traditional view that air transport does not directly serve the majority of Africans who happen to live in abject poverty.

The main reasons for the African Union to exercise all these efforts in this mode of transport is, first and foremost, in due recognition of the fact that in today's global economy, air transport has a great potential to propel Africa into the fast lane of socio-economic development. Just imagine how the wireless mobile phone revolution has enhanced faster connectivity to a huge and growing number of Africans who would, otherwise, only dream of owning a phone line during the era of fixed-line telephony. Similarly, many are now recognising the high synergy offered by air transport in all human activities.

Secondly, this is an industry where significant groundwork and decisions had been made by stakeholders in the continent that require expeditious implementation in order to enhance its productivity. Specifically, the adoption of the **Yamoussoukro Declaration on a New Air Transport Policy for Africa in 1988** and the **Yamoussoukro Decision on the Liberalisation of Air Transport Markets in Africa in 1999** provided a comprehensive strategic development framework for the industry in the continent. Since then, concrete policy, institutional and regulatory measures have been initiated and necessitated concerted efforts to reach conclusion. Details will be provided in the course of the conference.

Honourable Ministers

Ladies and Gentlemen

As we all know, the European Union (EU) is a longstanding commercial partner of Africa. This fact is even more evident in air transport business where the EU is the biggest external market of African airlines. Likewise, European carriers constitute the dominant segment of foreign carriers operating into Africa. This means that there is a clearly vested interest for the two sides to work together to create an operational environment that is mutually conducive to their aviation industries.

Furthermore, the EU is a major development partner of Africa. Cooperation between the EU and individual African States has a long history. Lately, this has been extended to the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and, very recently, to the African Union. In this

regard, the EU has undertaken to support Africa in its socio-economic and political endeavours. In particular, the EU-Africa Infrastructure Partnership launched in October 2007 covers some activities in the AU Plan of Action on air transport whose beneficiaries include Member States, RECs and Specialised Agencies.

However, the African Union is well aware that there is a significant difference in the levels of development between the two sides. Consequently, in the attempt to build an equal and fair cooperation, numerous challenges have to be addressed along the way. This is the essence of the dialogue process that has been initiated between our two sides in the field of aviation. I believe that with clear resolve, the process will yield desired results and strengthen our cooperation in this area.

This conference is a significant milestone in that process. Therefore, I would like to urge all of us attending this conference to engage in positive deliberations with focus on making the EU-Africa Aviation Cooperation a viable and mutually beneficial undertaking for the prosperity of the air transport industries of our two regions.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations and successful outcome.

THANK YOU