

**Speech of Daniel CALLEJA
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**Introduction speech
EU-Africa Air transport Conference
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EU-Africa relations in air transport: time to boost our cooperation

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very pleased to be with you today for this first ever air transport conference between the EU and Africa. This is a milestone in our enhanced dialogue to strengthen air transport and build a deeper cooperation. This conference counts with the participation of all relevant authorities from both continents: the number of participants is a clear testimony of the importance of air transport in Africa's development and the huge interest it creates.

I would like to share with you some key reflections about this event which will bring us together for 2 days. Indeed, such a conference cannot, and must not, be another congress on aviation limited to an exchange of views on all dimensions of air transport. We must see further and think about a new start in our relations: if our realities are different, we face similar challenges and a joint destiny.

I am anxious to see our common work starting. Nevertheless, if you allow me, I would like to recall what the main objectives of this very important event are.

There are a number of reasons why Europe and Africa need each other. It is also true in aviation. And the main reason is that we have clearly a common interest for the development of an air transport sector which brings economic development and more mobility, not only between the two continents, but also within Africa.

The Air transport conference must be understood in this context. We must re-launch the dialogue and focus on 3 priorities:

- overcome the potential misunderstandings: we had in the recent past some misunderstandings on some of the most relevant issues like the Community designation or the adoption of an EU list on banned airlines. I think that these aspects have been widely explained by the Vice-president Tajani in the recent meeting of the African Union. But, if needed, we must use the opportunity of this conference to meet and take the time to listen to each other.

- find solutions to the most urgent questions: if we want our dialogue to achieve something, we must identify the priorities and address the most important issues. Among the various presentations which will be made during this conference, we will have the opportunity to define

what is immediately achievable and what can be done at longer term. It is our responsibility to focus on concrete deliverables and go beyond mere declarations to define a roadmap. Words are worth if they lead to action. And Vice-President Tajani made it clear in his recent statement that time has come for moving ahead.

- invest for the future and pave the way for more solidarity: our move for a closer cooperation in aviation must also promote a shared vision. The different tasks we will agree on together are meant to boost the air transport in Africa and create the best conditions for its development. This can be done on the basis of shared objectives and a common view on what is needed and what is the best way to succeed. This is the reason why we need to create the relevant bodies for a permanent structured dialogue, as a Common Cooperation Committee: we will have to constantly reassess our needs and the best way to address the most important issues at stake. In a nutshell, the relationship between the EU and Africa must be ambitious but very pragmatic.

In the recent years, aviation has not been identified as a priority for the development of the African continent. Today we are aware of its importance: it is an unavoidable and incomparable tool to foster integration and achieve more solidarity. We need to develop a comprehensive aviation policy framework and support the efforts made in favour of an increased integration and opening-up of the markets. Based on our own experience in the last 15 years, we know

that the establishment of an aviation single market boosts the economy and favours a huge increase in the traffic. The creation of new opportunities is a first result which can happen in a very short period of time: it gives the possibility to have more operators and more routes.

But we must go further. There is no single market without common rules which enhance the quality of air transport. We should not speak only about liberalisation but also about qualitative tools to guarantee the highest level in safety, security and competition environment. The regulatory convergence is not a complement to the single market. It is a pre-condition for its success and constitutes the second leg for a strong air transport industry in a fair competition framework.

The EU can explain its peculiarities and the conditions for its success. However, it is not the only way and far from us the intention to impose any model. Each continent must face its specificities if success is to happen. This is why we want to set-up an aviation partnership, and certainly not impose any view.

But we can share some reflections.

I see six key issues which could characterise our dialogue in the coming times:

a) Air safety should be our first goal. As Mr Tajani, the European Commission Vice-President in charge of Transport, said in Addis-Abbeba, our aim should be to have an empty EU list of banned aircrafts ! Air Transport has always been the most secure mode of transport but, according to the ICAO standards, there is room for improvement in Africa. This priority requires a joint approach in order to define the appropriate leverage for more safety in Africa. We have to find the best ways to reduce the number of accidents and improve the safety level, and bring Africans skies to the average world level.

b) The modernisation of the economic regulation is a key element for Africa in order to strengthen its attractiveness for the transport of passengers and goods. It should also aim at developing the intra-African air traffic which remains quite low. In order to support the process initiated by the Yamoussoukro decision, it is of primary importance to reinforce the continental and regional entities of civil aviation and to give the assistance needed for its implementation.

c) Air Traffic Management is also a very important issue. The traffic growth requires the development of the adequate infrastructure of communication and navigation, as well as the oversight of air traffic. The conditions of Africa are specific and the European experience

cannot and should not be exported as such. However, air transport in Africa will certainly need a reorganisation of its airspace and of the existing routes. This modernisation can take place at the regional level but it will have to take into account the airlines' needs for intra-African and intercontinental routes. There are some interesting lessons to learn from the EU experience and the development of SESAR, the technological pillar of the Single European Sky.

d) Satellite navigation is another asset for air transport. The extension of the benefits of EGNOS to non equipped African regions can allow substantial economies for both operations and infrastructure. This is an added value to consider.

e) The protection of the environment is a growing challenge for international aviation. It must get the balance right between the protective measures, which aim at including aviation in the emissions trading system, and aid for the developing countries, which wish to adopt measures to limit their own emissions. There is room for a further co-operation between the EU and Africa to adapt to the climate change effects and limit the emissions. The impact of the measures to mitigate the climate change effects on developing countries must also be properly assessed.

f) last but not least, security has become another priority. The risks of terrorist attacks affect all countries in both continents. The flights to

be protected are not only those between the EU and Africa but also the domestic flights and those towards third countries. We cannot avoid dealing with this crucial issue and we have to envisage which common actions can be done to secure better air transport.

These are the main issues for our dialogue. I would like to add another one of great importance: we must re-establish the legal certainty in our relations by solving the problem of the Community designation. As you may know, since we have created a European Air Transport Single Market, there are no national carriers anymore. All of them are Europeans and have access to the benefits of bilateral agreements. Any other provision is incompatible with European law, and our Member States would be unable to enforce it. With the help of our partners throughout the world, we have succeeded in modifying around 800 existing agreements and I am confident that we will do the same with our African partners, as already done with success with the West African Economic and Monetary Union.

Indeed, there is a lot to do! All these actions that we have to launch go towards a single goal: we need more cooperation to develop a strong, safe and sustainable air transport. In times of crisis, the worst would be to adopt protectionist measures.

As maintained by IATA, we need more open markets and more world integration if we want to give a future to the air transport industry. In the context of the EU-Africa relations, we need also more solidarity and a deeper partnership.

It is time to give a new impetus to our dialogue and build a strong cooperation at short and medium term, based on concrete actions.

I really hope that these two days will allow us to understand each other better and deliver concrete steps for a strengthened cooperation.

Thank you very much.