



Advancing the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area: proposing transformative strategic actions

Fifty-seventh session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

12 - 18 March, 2025, Addis Ababa

## SIDE EVENT

*Organized by the Technology, Innovation, Connectivity and Infrastructure Development Division and the Regional Integration and Trade Division*

# The Single African Air Transport Market, the free movement of people and the African Continental Free Trade Area

## Background

The Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area entered into force in 2019. It has the potential to transform growth and development on the continent. Research by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) shows that the implementation of the Agreement will boost intra-African trade by about 45 per cent in 2045,<sup>1</sup> but for it to achieve in full its transformative potential, it must be accompanied by the implementation of other important integration initiatives, such as the Declaration of Yamoussoukro on a New African Air Transport Policy and the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment.

ECA spearheaded the adoption in 1988 by African ministers responsible for civil aviation of the Yamoussoukro Declaration to create a conducive environment for the development of air transport in Africa. In the decision relating to the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Declaration concerning the liberalization of access to air transport markets in Africa, adopted in 1999 by those ministers, principles were established for internal market liberalization and fair

competition in the intra-African air transport market. The Single African Air Transport Market was launched in 2018 to give a fresh impetus to the liberalization of aviation across Africa.

Whereas the establishment and ongoing implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and the creation of the Single African Air Transport Market have spurred efforts to liberalize African markets for goods and services, the slow pace at which the Protocol has been ratified, and its failure to enter into force, remain major constraints to the achievement of the objectives of the Agreement and the Yamoussoukro Declaration. It is, therefore, important to align the transport services provisions of the Agreement with those of the Yamoussoukro Decision in order to avoid policy conflicts and duplication of efforts in the regulation of air transport on the continent. In addition, it is important to draw and apply lessons relating to the implementation of Yamoussoukro Decision when implementing the Agreement, and vice versa, and to appreciate fully the enabling role that the adoption and subsequent implementation of the Protocol would have on both the Agreement and the Single African Air Transport Market.

<sup>1</sup> As compared to a situation without the Agreement; see ECA and Centre d'études prospectives et d'informations internationales, "Implementing the AfCFTA Agreement and implications for Africa's regional value chains" (forthcoming).



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## Objective

The objective of the side event is to broaden the discourse on the benefits and challenges of the Single African Air Transport Market beyond stakeholders in the aviation industry, and to discuss the advancement of the free movement of people, goods and services. Fresh perspectives will be given to the acceleration of the implementation of the Market and the optimization of the mutual benefits of the Agreement, Market and Protocol.

## Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes of the side event are:

- (a) Improved understanding of the synergies between the Agreement and the Market, including in relation to the free movement of people, goods and services;
- (b) Greater awareness among stakeholders in the finance and trade sectors of the benefits of the Market;
- (c) New insight on the ways to accelerate the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision and the Market;
- (d) Fresh perspectives on how implementation of the Protocol will help to attain the objectives of the Agreement and the Market, and the imperative for its ratification.

## Target audience

The target audience includes members of the monitoring body of the Yamoussoukro Decision, including the African Airlines Association, the African Civil Aviation Commission, the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission and regional economic communities; senior officials from ministries responsible for finance, planning, economic development, trade and air transport; and airline representatives.

## Speakers

The details of the speakers who will feature in the side event will be published in due course.

## Further information

For further information, please contact the Director of the Technology, Innovation, Connectivity and Infrastructure Development Division, ECA, Robert Lisinge (lisinge@un.org; +251 91 1886054; +251 11 5443443); Economic Affairs Officer, Technology, Innovation, Connectivity and Infrastructure Development Division, ECA, Placide Badji (aconkpanle.badji@un.org; +251 92 9084157); and Economic Affairs Officer, Regional Integration and Trade Division, Ndinaye Sekwi Charumbira (ndinayi.sekwi@un.org; +251 91 2140201).

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