



STATEMENT

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**DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE CAPACITY BUILDING
TRAINING WORKSHOP ON ANNEX 6 – ON REGULATIONS ON
CONSUMER PROTECTION OF YD FOR EASTERN AFRICAN REGION.**

KAMPALA, REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

26TH -30TH AUGUST 2024



Distinguished Delegates; from Member States of the Eastern African Region.

Representatives from the Regional Economic Communities of COMESA, EAC and IGAD

Delegates from aviation partner organizations of AFRAA, AFCAC, IATA, ICAO-ESAF.....

Officials from the Ministry of Transport

Officials of the Uganda Civil Aviation Authority

Officials of the Consumer Protection Organization

Officials of the National Airlines

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my privilege and honour to welcome such a distinguished gathering to the Capacity Building Training Workshop on Annex 6 - Regulations on Consumer Protection of the Yamoussoukro Decision for the Eastern African Region. This workshop follows the successful implementation of the Support to Air Transport Sector Development programme, which is sponsored by the European Union. COMESA being the spearheading REC for this programme on behalf of the other Regional Economic Communities of EAC, IGAD, IOC and SADC – while AFCAC as the mandated AUC arm. To demonstrate the high level of commitment to

implement and sustain the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), COMESA has partnered with AFCAC to jointly organize the training workshop in collaboration with IATA. I am aware that a similar workshop will also take place for the Southern African Region until the entire continent is covered. I hereby take this opportunity to congratulate AFCAC, COMESA and IATA for synergising efforts for the common good of the air transport industry in the Continent.

Allow me to thank the programme organizers for choosing UGANDA for this training workshop, the outcome of this workshop will better equip our experts to facilitate and sustain the SAATM by giving confidence to consumers of aviation services.

This workshop comes at a time when protection of the consumers of air transport services is gaining momentum across the continent, and the achievement of Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) and Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) goals involve the utilization of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to serve as building blocks for effective implementation of the YD regulatory texts annexes, specifically *annex 6, regulations on consumer protection of air transport services within Africa*.

To this end, mechanisms and arrangements have been devised in the form of a framework of collaboration between AFCAC, COMESA and Eastern Africa Region Member States to ensure optimal benefits. The Framework promotes synergy by avoiding duplication and facilitates efficiency in advancing our regional integration agenda. It is also designed to promote transparency, which is critical to building trust among the Member States and collaborating partners.

Distinguished delegates,

You are aware that Africa Agenda 2063 is currently being implemented and one of the African Union's flagship projects is to operationalize SAATM which aims to strengthen intra-regional connectivity between the capital cities of African countries and ensure the availability of a single unified air transport market in Africa, as an impetus to the continent's economic integration and growth agenda. It is good to note that UGANDA provides air connectivity to various destinations within the continent and beyond, thus boosting trade and tourism for the benefit of the entire continent hence recognizing Uganda's role in the implementation of SAATM, one of the AU's flagship projects.

Successful implementation of the SAATM and unity of purpose—speaking with one voice—are two critical elements that will enable Africa to be counted and effective in the world arena. I strongly believe that the cooperation within the Eastern Africa Region and with our external partners could be pursued efficiently in the years ahead with the ultimate goal of achieving an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful region.

Distinguished Delegates,

Article 9.6 of the Yamoussoukro Decision requires the Executing Agency (EA) to ensure that consumer rights are protected. All AU member States should therefore recognize the need for consumer involvement in the effective regulation of the air transport industry and the need to create consumer protection units, where they don't exist, both at the Regional and Member States level. Most consumers of air transport services in the

continent suffer unfair treatment from air transport service providers, coupled with inadequate information, there is, therefore, a need to ensure we enhance awareness of their rights and airline responsibilities.

This workshop should therefore Identify specific consumer issues that need prioritization, identify capacity gaps and, further the facilitation of capacity building as is being done in this workshop starting today, share global best practices in consumer protection and, above all identify ways and means of implementing or “harmonizing” consumer protection policies, laws and regulations.

In doing so, consumer protection practitioners must understand the balance between protecting consumer rights and maintaining a sustainable air transport service and, this will give consumers confidence in the air transport industry.

Distinguished delegates,

On 28 November 2017, Uganda ratified the Montreal Convention (Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules for International Carriage by Air) that was signed on 28 May 1999 and entered into force on 04 November 2003.

However, effective implementation of Consumer Protection in Air Transport requires the development of Consumer Protection and Competition regulations in Uganda and at the EAC, of which currently:

- The EAC Air Transport Consumer Protection Regulations, domesticating Annex 6 – Regulations on Consumer Protection of YD, is pending approval by the Council of Ministers.
- Uganda, under Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives, is in the process of developing the Competition Regulations following the promulgation of the Competition Act in February 2024.
- The Consumer Protection Bill is pending presentation to Parliament of Uganda following the completion of the review with respect to Government policy on rationalization of State entities.

As the process of domestication of the Montreal Convention and other related laws such as Annex 6 to the YD, are underway, Uganda Civil Aviation Authority has established a Consumer Protection Unit that is currently working in collaboration with the Public Affairs Department and Airport Management, using Procedure Manuals and Guidance Materials, to address matters regarding Consumer Protection.

Distinguished delegates,

Discussing the core principles of consumer protection is key to this training workshop, this will bring in a balance of knowing where to apply certain rules or regulations depending on the different social, political, and economic characteristics while taking cognizance of safety and security. The legal statutes to be in place should examine the operating environment to ensure the continued operation of the air transport service providers. In addition to providing clear and concise information, States should be in a position to provide definitions such as “**massive disruption**”

“extraordinary circumstances”, “force majeure” or “situations beyond the control” for a better understanding of the responsibilities of airlines by the consumer.

In this regard, there is an urgent need to raise awareness among air transport consumers to enable them to make informed choices, this includes access to information, clear guidelines on legal instruments applicable under specific situations and available avenues for recourse in case of a dispute.

Distinguished delegates,

This training will no doubt yield immense benefits for our region, and I believe with the facilitation of IATA in the presence of experts from AFCAC and COMESA you will acquire the necessary skills and information necessary to enable you to address all the gaps in your respective air transport regulations, including legal frameworks required to mitigate concerns for air transport consumers.

Once again, I wish to thank AFCAC and COMESA for this training workshop and the exemplary work they are doing on the continent. I would like to thank you all for participating in this training workshop and wish you fruitful deliberations.

During your short stay in UGANDA, I urge you to take time to explore the surroundings, including historic sites, and business facilities and also take a tour of the tourist sites not forgetting the source of the NILE, the longest river in Africa, this is the PEARL of Africa.

On that note, distinguished delegates, I now declare the capacity-building workshops on annex-6 to the YD officially open.

Thank you for your attention.