



**Goodwill Remarks by
the President of the ICAO Council
Dr. Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu
To the Special Meeting of
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
Member States on the occasion of the
Second ICAO Meeting on the Sustainable Development
of Air Transport in Africa**

(Accra, Ghana, 28 March 2017)

DG CAA of Ghana,

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today at this Special Meeting of ECOWAS Member States.

I would like to thank our Host, the Ghana Civil Aviation Authority, for taking the initiative in organizing this special meeting prior to the Opening of ICAO's 2nd Meeting on the Sustainable Development of Air Transport in Africa.

From the outset, we should recognize that West Africa's air transport market has huge and untapped potential. And yet as a sub-region with a population of over 300 million people, accounting for thirty-one per cent of Africa's entire population, its air transport market represents only about 17 per cent of Africa-wide aviation activity. The low demand is also reflected in its not very impressive load factors hovering around 60 per cent or less.

In order for air transport to play its role as an engine of economic growth in this region, States should liberalize market access in accordance with the Yamoussoukro Decision and in line with the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063.

The creation of a Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), through the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision, represents a low-cost policy measure which can have dramatic economic results. As of today, however, only 19 African States have committed to the Single African Market and signed its solemn declaration. However this includes 10 of the 15 States in West Africa. For ECOWAS it is an encouraging development. Also considering that the ECOWAS had adopted a protocol on free movement and removal of visa among its member States for several decades, it is a surprise as to why air transport services are so limited.

I am also aware that, on the critical issue of safety, considerable progress has been made in recent years, and that no countries in this sub-region are any longer associated with ICAO Significant Safety Concerns (SSCs). This has been a positive impact achieved through the ICAO AFI plan in collaboration with AFCACs AFI CIS. However it is important to also recall that the signature of the solemn declaration should not be an end in itself. Operators of ECOWAS States still need to meet the eligibility criteria under articles 6.9 and 6.12 of the YD. In this regard, it is unfortunate that 5 States in this region are still below the 60% target of Effective Implementation as agreed to in the Abuja Declaration on Aviation Safety in the AFI Region.

One of the more impressive safety achievements of the West African region has been the establishment of the Banjul Accord Group Safety Oversight Organization (BAGASOO); the COSCAP UEMOA is also effectively being transformed into an RSOO. I am confident that with continuous collaboration

between ICAO, AFCAC and other RSOOs, the level of compliance with ICAO's Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) will only continue to increase, along with the safety performance in all of your States.

In the area of aviation security and facilitation, I would like to highlight the ICAO Comprehensive Implementation Plan for AVSEC and Facilitation in Africa (AFI SEC FAL Plan) and the support provided by ICAO under the Sahel Project in the framework of our Traveller Identification Programme (TRIP) strategy. This pilot assistance project aims at strengthening travel document security and identification management in the Sahel region, through technical assessment missions, regional seminars and training activities.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you gather here today to exchange ideas on how to improve flight connectivity in this region, ICAO would strongly recommend that you also focus a good deal of your attention on the determination of practical solutions and action plans to modernize existing aviation infrastructure for airport and air navigation services.

Aviation growth is poised to bring substantial socio-economic benefits and sustainable prosperity to your States, but to do so we must ensure that you are prepared with facilities and systems to handle the increased flight volumes, safely and efficiently. This also includes the need for continuous training and capacity building to meet the operational and regulatory requirements taking into account the current and future ICAO Global Plans for Aviation Safety and Air Navigation.

Since this Special Meeting of ECOWAS Member States is the very first of its kind, let me also extend my hope and expectation that it will become a regular opportunity for States, industry stakeholders and development partners to

keep building a safe, secure, efficient, economically viable, and environmentally responsible air transport system in West Africa.

I wish to reiterate ICAO's commitment to support the development of civil aviation on the West African region in consonance with our no Country Left Behind initiative.

Thank you.