COVID-19 - Restart and Recovery Actions for the African Aviation Industry

The 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), declared as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020, has adversely impacted the daily lives of billions of people and caused massive negative impacts on the world economy. It has significantly impacted air transport with challenging financial implications to the aviation and tourism sectors and therefore the uncertainty faced by stakeholders at all levels is not helpful for planning purposes. The extent of the ripple effect will affect some strategic institutions and pillars that drive air transport contribution to the African economy, mainly the African Union Agenda 2063 and its Flagship Projects, Civil Aviation Authorities, Airlines, Airports, Air Navigation and Other Service Providers. Therefore, the African Union Transport Sub-Committee of the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Transport, Transcontinental and Interregional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism agreed unanimously that financial assistance was essential to enable the African Civil Aviation to recover from the COVID-19’s impact. The STC further supported that a common African approach be adopted to ensure aviation, with its many linkages to the national, regional and global economies, plays its unravelling leading role as an economic enabler to allow Africa to rebuild its aviation sector. Read more @ http://www.afcac.org/en/

Teleconferences of the High Level Task Force (HLTF) on COVID-19 Restart and Recovery Strategy for the African Civil Aviation Industry

The High Level Task Force (HLTF) was established. HLTF has established three Working Groups whose members are those in the HLTF and six States from the was also a result of recommendations from the COVID-19 related meeting of DGs of African CAAs. The HLTF is composed of the AUC, ICAO-Regional Directors (WACAF, ESAF, MID, EUR/NAT), AFRAA, IATA-Africa, ACI-Africa, was published, the Report of the HLTF is submitted to the CANSO-Africa, UNECA, African Representatives on the AUC for its consideration by the STC’s Sub-Committee/Task force of ICAO, AU-RECs, and Africa CDC. The Bureau. Read more @ http://www.afcac.org/en/

The Republic of Namibia has signed the Solemn Commitment to the SAATM - 30 May 2020

The Republic of Namibia has signed the Solemn Commitment indicating that it is fully committed to participating in, and implementing the African Union Decisions concerning the full implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision on liberalization of air transport markets in Africa thereby bringing the total number of SAATM member States to 34.

Focus:

COVID-19 - Restart and Recovery Actions for the African Aviation Industry
The full operationalization of SAATM will play a defining role in determining the speed and impetus of the Industry Recovery.

ICAO Council adopts new COVID-19 aviation recovery ‘Take Off’ guidelines to reconnect the world.

Read more @ http://www.afcac.org/en/
Unlike the European and US markets, where internal flights represent more than 85% of the seats, the African market is more exposed to the international segment, where the recovery of passengers’ willingness to fly is expected to be slower. The COVID-19 recovery rate will be determined largely by the rate each country contain the pandemic and lift up the current severe travel restrictions on cross border movements, and depending on the level of pre-COVID-19 transport activities. History has shown with previous world crises (i.e. SARS pandemic etc.) that domestic/enclosed markets with proper policies (i.e. US domestic or Intra-EU traffics) recover faster than international segments. The international traffic rebound will be harder as it will also depend on each country pair and cannot externally be influenced at the speed they may be ready to open. The full operationalization and implementation of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) by all States subscribing to the Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) will play a defining role in determining the speed at which the African aviation industry will recover.

A deepened integration within the domestic/enclosed African air transport market offers enormous opportunities for African airlines and aviation business to financially keep afloat once African States rally behind the African Union led initiative for a common approach to successfully leverage on the advantages a fully liberalized single air transport market offers participants in the economy. Africa aviation has undoubtedly an opportunity to strike the appropriate balance required within the domestic/enclosed market and keep aviation support jobs, extend the lifeline of airlines and aviation businesses under the SAATM umbrella. The sustainability of the aviation sector in Africa will depend, to a large extent, on the adequacy of the stimulation packages implemented by each of the national governments. In this regard, multilateral development banks can play a key role in the recovery of this sector in Africa. In the short term, the liquidity of airlines should be guaranteed. Several countries in Africa are announcing support for the aviation sector in order to reduce the impact of the COVID-19. Subsequently, measures should be implemented to reactivate the demand so that the sector’s liquidity problems do not result in solvency problems and bankruptcies. Airports will also require relief measures. Governments will have to consider additional measures to rebalance the concession contracts of many airport operators. The Single African Air Transport Market should be implemented vigorously and strategies should differ from region to region with a view to increase the interregional traffic which accounted for 6% of commercial seats in 2019. Expected recovery rate in selected African markets will differ from region to region, therefore application of appropriate SAATM concrete measures should be considered as part of the bigger recovery plan.

The African Development Bank Group approved a grant of USD 7 millions for the implementation of the Single African Air Transport Market - SAATM (Source: AfDB)

The Board of Directors of the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group on 4 February 2020, approved a grant of USD 7 million to the African Civil Aviation Commission, to implement the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM). With this support of USD 6.85 million, the African Development Fund, the concessional financing window of AfDB, will provide up to 89.5% of the total cost estimated at USD 7.65 million and the AFCAC will finance 10.46% covering the remaining costs. This will allow AFCAC to establish the necessary Institutional and Regulatory Framework as well as raising awareness for the successful implementation of the SAATM. The project, with an implementation period of 36 months, consists of three components: Institutional strengthening of the AFCAC to provide the Executing Agency and other stakeholders institutions, mainly RECS, States and Airlines with the awareness and skills needed to establish the SAATM in a sustainable manner; Support to the sustainable development of Air Transport in Africa through enhanced safety, security, environmental protection; Project management, monitoring and evaluation. The SAATM is expected to improve access to air travel for Africans (approx. 1.2 billion people), thus supporting regional integration, boosting intra-Africa trade and tourism. The SAATM is considered as a crucial logistic infrastructure and a facilitator for the successful operation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) complemented by the Protocol on the Free Movement of People and Goods and the African passport. The AU vision for 2063 sets out an ambitious target that intra-African trade would grow from 10% in 2012 to about 50% by 2045 as a result of deeper integration. The SAATM was launched and established on 28 January 2018 as the first AU 2063 Agenda flagship project.
In response to the serious impacts on the international civil aviation sector as a result of COVID-19 and the need for wide-ranging government and industry coordination to help reconnect the world, the Council of the ICAO established on 29 April 2020, a COVID-19 Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART). The aim of this Task Force was to identify and recommend strategic priorities and policies for States and industry operators, and to leverage all available government and industry data toward solutions to the immediate challenges to be addressed to reboot the network for a post-COVID world, and make it more resilient and responsive in the process. The Task Force is composed of some Representatives on the Council which included Zambia and Cote d’Ivoire, AU Commissioner of Infrastructure and Energy, and the Secretary General of AFCAC. On 1st June 2020, the Council adopted a new report and guidelines produced by the CART and aimed at restarting the international air transport system and aligning its global recovery. The CART’s Report is supplemented by the "Guidance for Air Travel through the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis" which contains guidelines for public health risk mitigation measures and four separate modules relating to airports, aircraft, crew, and air cargo. Read more @ https://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/ICAO-Council-establishes-COVID19-Aviation-Recovery-Task-Force-

ICAO promotes COVID-19-free Public Health Corridors to keep vital air cargo moving - 13 May 2020

ICAO is encouraging the establishment of special COVID-19-free Public Health Corridors (PHCs) to address the extensive country-to-country border restrictions now in place due to national pandemic measures. In an attachment and appendix to its latest bulletin, ICAO underscored to national governments that current disruptions to international air movements have severely disrupted the global aviation network, including the transport of essential items such as medical supplies and food. To keep supply lines open, and access to needed supplies better assured, the ICAO Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation has recommended that PHCs be established where COVID-19-free or “clean” crew, aircraft, airport facilities, and passengers can continue to undertake their urgently-needed work. Guidance relating specifically to flight crew conducting essential cargo operations is appended to the new ICAO bulletin. Further PHC provisions in aid of humanitarian, repatriation, and scheduled passenger operations will be developed within the scope of ICAO’s Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART), in collaboration with aviation industry and public health authorities. Given the lack of a vaccine and definitive treatment for COVID-19, and persisting limitations on testing and resources, the ICAO bulletin notes that while the risk of contracting COVID-19 during air travel cannot yet be completely eliminated, the risk to crew and passengers can be significantly mitigated by PHC measures. There is no doubt that air transport is an economic enabler with its speed in helping communities to overcome hardship, through the delivery of essential goods and supplies. This has been reaffirmed since the declaration of COVID19 as a global pandemic as it has enabled AU CDC to deliver in value US$15,000,000 worth of essential goods and supplies to AU States, since March 2020. Read more @ https://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/ICAO-promotes-COVID19-free-public-health-corridors-to-keep-vital-air-cargo-moving.aspx

1.5 billion fewer international air travelers this year according to ICAO forecast - 30 April 2020

ICAO issued its first complete 2020 air passenger forecast revealing that airlines may be faced with 1.5 billion fewer international air travelers this year. In parallel, international seat capacity could drop by almost three-quarters, resulting in a 273 billion dollar loss compared to previously expected gross operating revenues. In the updated analysis, the analytical timeframe was extended for another three months to December 2020, and more reliable air fare data was used to calculate revenue reduction. ICAO has been providing regularly updated analyses on the economic impact of COVID-19 on air transport since early February 2020, and is providing continuous guidance to air transport planners, regulators, and operators. The projections are significant to many countries now planning their COVID-19 recovery scenarios, given the importance of tourism, global supply chains, and many other air connectivity factors to local socio-economic prosperity. The full version of the report, along with ICAO forecast and guidance materials, are available free of charge for governments, the industry and the general public through the agency’s COVID-19 information portal.

ICAO launches COVID-19 Contingency Coordination Tool and New Measures to ensure safe operations, 3 April 2020 - ICAO issued a State letter drawing the attention of national governments to new measures aimed at ensuring safe operations during COVID-19, and to a contingency coordination website. Read more @ https://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/ICAO-establishes-new-COVID19.aspx
Virtual Coordination Meetings facilitated by ICAO Air Transport Bureau - April 2020

The Secretary General and Directors of the African Civil Aviation Commission attended regularly the coordination meetings facilitated by ICAO Air Transport Bureau. The meetings were held on every Tuesday and attended by ICAO (HQ and Regional Offices), International Organizations (WHO, IMO, IOM, WCO, WFP), Regional Organizations (AU, EU, ACAA, AFCAC, ECAC, LACAC) and Industry Partners (ACI, CANSO, FIATA, GEA, IATA, ICCAIA, TIACA). The objective of such meetings was the creation of a platform of discussions aimed at facilitating the coordination and cooperation of various aviation stakeholders for the management of the COVID-19 and the recovery of the aviation industry. The Secretary General of AFCAC informed regularly the meetings of the Business Continuity Plan of AFCAC and the Draft Continental Recovery Plan submitted to the Joint Committee of African Ministers of Air Transport and the Ministers of Finance, coordinated by the African Union Commission. He also informed of the creation of the High-Level Task Force, which is established to ensure that there is no duplication of efforts of various stakeholders in conducting their action plans and post COVID-19 recovery strategies. The meeting also noted the establishment by ICAO Secretariat of the ICAO Secretariat COVID-19 Emergency Programme Group (SCEPG) to coordinate its activities with the aim of supporting States and industry to cope with such challenges in the immediate, near and longer terms; and the establishment by ICAO Council of the Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) to provide recommendations on strategic priorities and policies with the aim of supporting States and industry to cope with such challenges.

First ICAO ESASF & WACAF DG of Civil Aviation Virtual Meeting on COVID-19, 8-9 April 2020

The ICAO ESASF and WACAF Regional Offices, in coordination with AFCAC convened Virtual Emergency meeting of Directors-General of Civil Aviation Authorities (DGCA) of member States within their areas of accreditation on 8 and 9 April 2020 respectively. The purpose of the meeting was to ensure that the DGCA are all aware about the work of ICAO, follow up on recent ICAO State letters, assess with the situation prevailing in respective States and discuss any other issues of common interest related to COVID-19 environment. The Secretary General of AFCAC addressed the meeting and gave information on the on-going initiative of AFCAC to engage the AU Commission to address issues related to the pandemic and beyond. In this regard, the COVID-19 crisis could serve as a catalyst towards gradual materialization of the Single African Air Transport Market, supported by the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Meeting between AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy and African Ambassadors to the ICAO on the need to support the Continental Strategy on COVID-19

The Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy H.E. Dr Amani Abou-Zeid and the African Ambassadors to the ICAO met via videoconference to discuss the urgent actions needed to contain the spread of COVID-19 and the continental strategy to assist Africa’s air transport industry during the recovery period. They discussed issues central to the urgent need to maintain the supply chain to facilitate the humanitarian assistance missions to AU member States being organized by the Africa CDC, the World Food Programme and the WHO in the efforts to support the effective implementation of the continental strategy on COVID-19 approved by the Extraordinary Summit of the AU Heads of State held on 3rd April 2020. Her Excellency, the Commissioner stated that the AUC is working with AFCAC, ICAO and other key African air transport stakeholders to ensure that all AU Member States keep airports open and maintain air navigation services for cargo flights and humanitarian assistance in order to maintain the supply chain. AUC is also working with ICAO and AFCAC to develop an Africa-focused economic assessment of the impact of COVID-19 to the air transport industry. The Ambassadors expressed their commitment to support the AUC and the key African air transport stakeholders in the ongoing efforts to implement the continental strategy on COVID-19. They also agreed to work together with the AUC to analyze all necessary actions to contain the pandemic and adopt a recovery plan for Africa’s air transport industry by working closely with ICAO regional offices, other key air transport stakeholders and the Member States. Read more @ https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20200422/joint-statement-meeting-between-dr-amani-abou-zeid-commissioner

AFRAA: Navigating COVID-19 pandemic and preparing for recovery post-crisis, 20 April 2020

The African Airlines Association has organized on 20 April 2020 a webinar under the theme “Navigating Covid-19 pandemic and preparing for recovery post-crisis”. The remarks by the SG of AFCAC were delivered at the opening of the session. A number of subject matter experts made presentations on how African airlines can create and implement recovery plans on areas such as fleet and network repositioning, finance and cash flow issues, fuel trends and fuel efficiency measures among others. The webinar concluded with a recovery plan that outlined a framework of actions to be taken by AFRAA in collaboration with various stakeholders. Read more @ http://afraa.org/press-release-afraa-develops-a-covid-19-recovery-plan-for-the-african-airline-industry/
The Teleworking Meeting of Experts of the Ministerial Working Group for Operationalization and Implementation of the SAATM - 26 May 2020

The Teleworking Meeting of Experts of the thirty three (33) Member States of the Ministerial Working Group of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) took place on 26th May 2020. The meeting was hosted online by the African Civil Aviation Commission in collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC). In attendance, were 51 Experts/representatives from twenty two (22) States out of the thirty three member States that have declared their Solemn Commitment to fully implement the Yamoussoukro Decision towards the establishment and implementation of SAATM. The following organisations and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) also participated in the meeting namely: the AUC, AFCAC, African Airline Association (AFRAA), Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), East African Community (EAC) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). In his remarks, the Secretary General of AFCAC, Mr. Tefera Mekonnen Tefera welcomed the Experts to the meeting. He highlighted the struggle the aviation industry was passing through in the wake COVID-19 pandemic and the inconveniences the Experts had to contend with in order to participate in the meeting. He mentioned that the meeting was convened in order to exploit the opportunities that the unfortunate pandemic brought on the industry so as to reposition the industry for a restart and quick recovery thereby advancing the course of SAATM initiative. He posited that the full implementation of the YD under SAATM will define the pace at which air transport in Africa will recover from the effects of COVID-19 and that continuous delay in the early restart and recovery of African Airlines post-COVID-19 will open the doors further to third party carriers to the disadvantage of African airlines which will mean that intra-Africa connectivity and momentum of SAATM implementation would be challenged.

Progress Report on SAATM and the Joint Prioritized Action Plan (JPAP) - 26 May 2020

During the virtual Meeting of Air Transport Experts of the Ministerial Working Group held on 26th May 2020, AFCAC presented a progress report on SAATM with particular emphasis on the implementation of Concrete Measures by member States as well as the updated Joint Prioritised Action Plan (2020) for the operationalisation of the SAATM. AFCAC reported that so far, 33 SAATM States which constitute 56% of the AU member States have signed on to the Solemn Commitment while 18 of them have further signed the Memorandum of Implementation (MoI) to remove restrictions in existing Bilateral Air Services Agreements that are contrary to the YD. The report further indicated that only 10 States have fully implemented the 8 Concrete Measures (29% of the SAATM) which means that 71% of the SAATM membership have not fully implemented the SAATM Concrete Measures while the average level of implementation of the Concrete measures is about 53%.

2nd African Regional Safety Oversight Organisations Platform Teleconference - 28 May 2020

AFCAC Secretary General gave opening remarks for the 2nd African RSOO Platform teleconference held on the 28th of May 2020. The teleconference was attended by BAGASOO, CASSOA, AAMAC, ISASO and AFCAC representatives. The SG called for all RSOOs in Africa to cooperate and find viable strategies to restart and recover the African aviation industry from effects of COVID-19 pandemic. AFCAC presented a paper on the “Initiative for restart and recovery of aviation industry in Africa.” The paper highlighted impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the aviation industry in Africa. RSOO members were appraised of the COVID-19 High Level Task Force (HLTF) initiative to develop strategies needed to restart the aviation industry. Other presentations discussed included: AFCAC/ RSOO Work Program 2020 (AFCAC), Strengthening RSOOs in Africa (AAMAC), Common Rules and Regulations for African States (BAGASOO), Emerging Safety & Security issues - Common Approach to Operationalize Drones in Africa (CASSOA).

Latest updates on the COVID-19 from Africa CDC

Situation Reports on the COVID-19 from WHO
Links to other News

https://www.africanaerospace.aero/737-max-production-resumes.html (28 May 2020) Boeing has resumed production of the 737 MAX at the company’s Renton, Wash. factory. The 737 programme began building aircraft at a low rate as it implements more than a dozen initiatives focused on enhancing workplace safety and product quality.

https://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/ICAO-ILO-and-IMO-issue-joint-call-to-world-governments-on-need-for-key-worker-designations-for-essential-air-and-sea-aspx (26 May 2020) ICAO joined the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in issuing a new Joint Statement on the need to ensure ‘key worker’ designations for the millions of skilled personnel now maintaining essential global air and sea trade capacities.

https://www.iata.org/en/pressroom/pr/2020-05-26-01/ (26 May 2020) Airline Debt to Balloon by 28% -Heavy New Debt Levels Will Weigh Down Recovery The International Air Transport Association (IATA) released an analysis showing that the airline industry's global debt could rise to $550 billion by year-end. That's a $120 billion increase over debt levels at the start of 2020.


https://www.iata.org/en/pressroom/pr/2020-05-20-01/ (20 May 2020) ACI and IATA Outline Roadmap for Aviation Industry Restart - Airports Council International (ACI) World and the IATA have called on governments to ensure any new measures introduced for airports and airlines in the wake of COVID-19 are supported by scientific evidence and are consistent across the world.

https://www.iata.org/en/pressroom/pr/2020-05-19-02/ (19 May 2020) IATA Board Declares Principles for Industry Re-start-The International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced a commitment by the airline CEOs on its Board of Governors to five principles for re-connecting the world by air transport.

https://www.thejakartapost.com/travel/2020/05/31/south-africa-to-allow-domestic-air-travel-for-business-from-june-1.html (13 May 2020) South Africa will allow domestic air travel for business purposes only from June 1 as the country further eases coronavirus lockdown regulations, the transport minister said on Saturday.


https://www.theafricareport.com/27491/coronavirus-a-unique-opportunity-for-african-aviation/ (6 May 2020) It is impossible to overstate the impact that COVID-19 is having on the global aviation sector. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) estimates that the industry will see its revenue shrink by 44% in 2020, while global GDP will "only" contract by approximately 3%.

https://www.africanews.com/2020/05/16/economics-of-covid-19-impact-on-africa/ (6 May 2020) The coronavirus epidemic continues to disrupt life across the world. The disruption is all but gathering steam in affected even virus -free African countries. The rate of infection is lower on the continent as compared to Europe, Asia and parts of the Americas, where lockdowns are in place.

https://www.africanaerospace.aero/urgent-appeal-to-international-community-to-support-african-travel-and-tourism-sector.html (6 May 2020) Five international air transport and tourism bodies have launched an appeal to international financial institutions, country development partners and international donors to support Africa’s Travel & Tourism sector which employs some 24.6 million people on the African continent.

https://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/ICAO-issues-new-guidance-on-COVID-19-aviation-safety-risks-aspx (6 May 2020) ICAO has developed a new publication aimed at helping countries to address the aviation safety risks arising due to the global effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

https://www.iata.org/en/pressroom/pr/2020-04-30-01/ (30 April 2020) ACI and IATA Call for Urgent Financial Assistance to Protect Jobs and Operations - ACI World and the IATA have today come together to call for governments to quickly grant financial relief to assist airport operators and airlines during the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis.

https://www.africanews.com/2020/05/16/economics-of-covid-19-impact-on-africa/ (6 May 2020) The coronavirus epidemic continues to disrupt life across the world. The disruption is all but gathering steam in affected even virus -free African countries. The rate of infection is lower on the continent as compared to Europe, Asia and parts of the Americas, where lockdowns are in place.
With the Dutch embassy extending support to the Kenyan horticulture industry, Kenya Airways Cargo boosted up its operation of transporting 40 tonnes of flowers and vegetables to Amsterdam. Air Tanzania is expecting to start flying cargo in the passenger cabin with effect from next week to keep business afloat amidst travel bans and decline in passenger demand due to Covid-19 outbreak.

Egypt’s Nile Air on 26th April urged the government to buy stakes in private airline companies to help them survive the crisis caused by the new coronavirus pandemic. Ethiopian Airlines completed the flight and delivery of the second donation by Jack Ma to all African countries.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) released data for March air cargo performance demonstrating a severe capacity shortfall. African airlines were less affected by disruptions in March. Many of the world’s airlines could be bankrupt by May because of the COVID-19 crisis, according to an aviation consultancy.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has called on regulators to take urgent action to help civil aviation operate seamlessly and safely between states during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to help facilitate the restart when the virus is contained.

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Air Mauritius is entering voluntary administration following a total collapse in revenues due to the Covid-19 crisis.

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