

Experts push for single African air transport market

By Vision Reporter

The third ministerial working group meeting on the Single African Air Transport Markets (SAATM) kicked off in Addis Ababa on Tuesday, with participants calling on African Union member states to implement the 1999 Yamoussoukro Decision towards the establishment of SAATM by 2017.

"2017 is almost over, yet only 23 countries have signed the solemn commitment on the immediate implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision," said Soteri Gatera, the chief of the industrialisation and infrastructure section of the Economic Commission for Africa.

He added: "Air transport is indispensable for tourism and enhancing air connectivity can help raise productivity by encouraging investment and innovation, thereby improving business operations."

Soteri also noted that liberalising the air transport market will lead to increased air services and route competition, resulting in lower fares.

"African airlines are waiting for the African open skies. More airlines would be created to serve the continent's internal air transport needs," said Soteri, who deplored the fact that African countries have more bilateral open sky agreements with partners outside the continent than with African partners.