



## **ECA CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS 2021**

### **SIDE EVENT:**

**Leveraging on AfCFTA to promote smooth functioning of Corridors for Sustainable Industrialization and Diversification during COVID-19 era.**

**March 20th, 2021: 4:00PM - 5:30 PM East Africa Time  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Address of H.E. Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid**

**Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy**

- **H.E Minister of Transport and Communications (WA-Country)**
- **H.E Mr. Thulagano Segokgo, Minister of Transport and Communications, Botswana**
- **Ms. Vera Songwe, Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary, ECA**
- **Ms. Fekitamoeloa Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General, UN-OHRLLS**
- **Mr. Omae Nyarandi, Executive Secretary of the Northern Corridor Transit Transport Coordination Authority**
- **Mr. Amadou Oumarou, Director, Infrastructure & Urban Development, African Development Bank**
- **All other Aviation stakeholders here present**
- **All protocol observed.**

I wish to thank you for inviting me to participate and deliver an address in this important webinar to share of experiences on how to promote smooth functioning of corridors during the COVID-19 pandemic leveraging on the AfCFTA.

On behalf of the Chairperson of African Union Commission (AUC) and on my own behalf, I wish to congratulate the United Nations Economic Community for Africa (ECA) as well as the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) for organizing this event at an appropriate time when we are putting together all our efforts to achieve a safe and sustainable restart and recovery of the whole transport sector.

**Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) has grossly devastated and adversely impacted all spheres of human activity and has, in particular, reversed the few progress that had been achieved for transport corridors on our way to reach more efficiency, all those last years. This has as well impacted African national economies and more heavily the most fragiles.

As you are aware, African counts 16 land-locked countries which totally depends on coastal countries to be deserted for the bulk of their imported and exported goods. Road corridors ensure more than 80% of movement of freight and people throughout the continent. A study by PIDA PAP1 has shown that corridor inefficiencies generate an annual loss of USD75 billion which is obviously borne in large proportion by the

populations and disrupts the development of intra-African trade. In addition, unleashing the full economic potential of these 16 land-locked countries depends heavily on our ability to interconnect the hinterland and ports by rail and road corridors where technical interoperability standards should be well established and respected, where customs and administrative operations should be simplified and lightened by the increased use of digitization; where police harassment and other abnormal practices should be eliminated. Already, the Covid-19 pandemic has taught us that the enormous potentials of digitization could rapidly be deployed in all sectors if we all show more political will.

To this end, my Department has worked with the support of all African Union Member States as well as partners to develop a digitalization strategy for a rapid digital transformation of various sectors of the African economy. Furthermore, the African Union has adopted in collaboration with the support of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, a more than 56,000 kms transAfrican highway network with a full package of norms and standards aimed first, at ensuring the connection of land-locked countries to the main ports and African capitals. The African Union Commission has also just completed the definition of the African rail network with its technical standards for interoperability, as the first phase of the establishment of an African rail market. This effort will make it possible to offer more low-cost and climate-friendly transport services among African countries, while boosting intra-African trade and where our 16 landlocked countries will not be left behind.

The African Union Commission just completed together with the ECA, AUDA-NEPAD, the African Development Bank, etc, the development of the second ten years' phase of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). One of the core criteria of the selection of continental projects of the criteria are innovation, digital inclusion and integration. By using such criteria, the African Union is expecting to enhance corridors efficiency at the end. The integrated corridor approach was then adopted as well as the implementation of the African Union strategy to unlock access to rural and remote areas on PIDA corridors in order to allow rural and remote areas communities to better contribute to regional trade.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

As you could see, the African Union Commission is contributing to the achievements of the Vienna programme on many ways. My Department also take great interest in the COVID recovery on corridors and actually contributed to the guidelines for transboundary transport operations in the context of the COVID-19. Allow me to ensure you that all the outcomes of our meeting will be carefully considered by the African Union Commission and transferred into real action together with our stakeholders.

I wish you a successful meeting

Thank you

**H.E. Amani Abou-Zeid**  
**Commissioner, Infrastructure and Energy, AUC**