

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Speech of The RT. Hon. Prime Minister,
Dr. Edouard Ngirente

**At the Official Opening of the 49th Annual General Assembly for
African Airlines Association**

Kigali Convention Centre, November 13th, 2017

- **Honourable Ministers,**
- **The President of the African Airlines Association (AFRAA),**
- **Secretary General of the African Airlines Association (AFRAA),**
- **Representative of the Director General of International Air Transport Association (IATA),**
- **CEO's, DG's and Airlines Representatives here present,**
- **Distinguished Guests,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good morning.

1. On behalf of His Excellency Paul Kagame, The President of the Republic of Rwanda, I am delighted to be with you today, at this Official Opening of the 49th Annual General Assembly for the African Airlines Association that is taking place here at the Kigali Convention Centre.

2. Our President wishes AFRAA many more years of excellent work in serving Africa, promoting and protecting our common interests of all its members. He assures you of his continued support in developing a vibrant aviation sector.

3. I wish to warmly welcome to Rwanda all participants to this forum. As a Country, we are honoured to host you.

4. A special thank you to the organizers of the 49th General Assembly of the African Airlines Association. As airline operations become more streamlined in Africa, we are seeing a new wave of increasing startup airlines that are reaching out to take advantage of the growing opportunities within the African aviation sector. We have no doubt that this annual General Assembly will discuss and agree on bold measures that will boost the African airline industry.

- **Excellencies,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

5. This year's AFRAA General Assembly themed "**Rethinking strategies for airline profitability in Africa**" comes at the right time. Statistics have shown that the aviation industry is an enabling force for economic transformation. According to the 2017 report by the Air Transport Action Group (ATAG), released September this year, air transport supports an estimated 63 million jobs globally and contributes \$ 2.7 trillion to the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

6. It is against this background that Rwanda has chosen to promote the aviation industry as an enabler of economic transformation. We have started building a new modern international airport, “The New Bugesera International Airport”. We have also increased RwandAir fleet and expanded its routes.

7. As we celebrate that a lot has been done to improve the African aviation industry, we need to also bear in mind that Africa’s aviation is still lagging behind to the rest of the world. There are more issues that should be fixed if we are to catch up.

8. African Governments and airlines should harmonize their operations including airport taxes, improve and expand the aviation infrastructure and train the required personnel.

9. To promote intra Africa trade, African Countries should facilitate and offer visas upon arrival. This will increase the number of air passengers and cargo levels. It is our call that, countries which have not yet signed the 1999 Yamoussoukro Decision concerning the liberalization of access to air transport markets in Africa do so as a matter of urgency.

10. This forum is therefore a good opportunity to discuss, share experiences and come up with recommendations to address the challenges facing the aviation sector in Africa.

- **Excellencies,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

11. I would like to conclude my remarks by thanking once again all organisers and participants of this important forum. Let us all strive to work together to continue promoting the African Aviation sector for the better future of the entire African continent.

12. With these remarks, on behalf of His Excellency Paul Kagame, the President of the Republic of Rwanda, it is now my pleasure to declare the 49th Annual General Assembly for African Airlines Association officially open.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish you fruitful deliberations.