

by Dagne Biazen

ADDIS ABABA - The 11th Aviation and Allied Business Conference has begun discussing the challenges the African civil aviation industry faces with a theme: "Air Transport in Africa: Translating Vision into Action."

Opening the conference yesterday, President Girma Wolde-Giorgis said that what air transport in Africa needs right now was action and any chance of translating vision into action would be possible if policy makers join forces with business leaders of African aviation.

President Girma further said that the problems begin with the notion that African countries with so many other problems cannot afford the luxury of air transport industry as it is capital and technology intensive.

The president urged the participants to deliberate aviation safety and security as more pressing and liberalization of African skies for Africans as priority.

"We African leaders should recognize the role of air transport as a catalyst of development and international trade," he added.



The conference in progress

African Airlines Association (AFRAA) Secretary General Christian Folly-Kossi on his part said in most African states foreign carriers are dominating the African skies.

The Secretary-General added: "This invasion of the continent is motivated by the fact that Africa is the fastest growing region for air travel next to Asia."

African carriers are weak and pose very little competitive threat to the mega-carriers, he said.

"Many of our airlines are bitterly complaining about irregular competition from Gulf carriers which enjoy unlimited financial resources and allegedly practicing dumping tariffs as they are not in need of running after profits," the Secretary-General said.