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Swakopmund, Namibia, 12 December 2017 (ECA) – Africa's integration agenda is experiencing a critical and momentous epoch with the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) scheduled for operationalization next year and with the creation of a Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), that will be launched by Heads of State at their January Summit in Addis Ababa, says ECA's Soteri Gatera.

In remarks to the PIDA Steering Committee at the on-going Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA Week 2017), Gatera, Chief of Infrastructure and Industrialisation in the Regional Integration and Trade Division, said things are looking bright for the continent with these developments.

"These two, as with all other regional integration initiatives, will contribute to the Africa We want if PIDA is made to deliver," said Mr. Gatera.

PIDA is a continent-wide programme for the development of priority regional and continental infrastructure in transport, energy, trans-boundary water and ICT. Adopted by African leaders in 2012, the PIDA has 433 projects, 51 of which are marked as priorities for the continent.

"PIDA as we all know is at the heart of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and has endorsed infrastructure development as a key enabler for the continent's integration and if we are to get there with all the positive things coming our way, capacity development, both in the public and private sectors aimed at fostering the skills and knowledge of delivering hard projects, has to be a new priority," said Mr. Soteri.

He added there were challenges that require attention by continental bodies and their partners.

"Many national infrastructure investment strategies, including PPPs, face issues in improving their understanding, knowledge, capacity, skills and establishing efficient processes that would allow them to properly develop and deliver the PPPs projects."

Capacity development, said Mr. Gatera, has to be a long-term process requiring a systemic approach, demand for improved public sector performance and supply of well-structured organizations and skilled personnel.

"We have to create institutional partnerships among and between relevant organizations, that involves commitment at the highest level, that can develop a long-term capacity building program for infrastructure that will be tied to the promoting of bankable projects. The institutional arrangement should contractually include the private sector who will participate in

both the funding and delivery of infrastructure projects,” he said.

Mr. Gatera said the ECA will soon be reaching out to its partners to discuss the need for a focused program on capacity development for infrastructure delivery Africa, with the objective of enhancing PPPs and particularly private sector participation in infrastructure assets delivery.

This initiative will focus on capacity building to develop policies, strategies and regulatory frameworks for PPPs in Africa.

PIDA Week is organized by the ECA, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and NEPAD to discuss progress made so far in efforts to inte-connect, integrate and transform Africa.

Issued by:

Communications Section
Economic Commission for Africa
PO Box 3001
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia
Tel: +251 11 551 5826
E-mail: eca-info@un.org ^[1]

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[1] <mailto:eca-info@un.org>