

Governments urged to unlock Africa's aviation's benefits

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) urged governments in Africa to maximise the positive social and economic power of aviation by working together to promote safe, sustainable and efficient air connectivity.

“African aviation supports \$55.8bn of economic activity and 6.2 million jobs. To enable aviation to be an even bigger driver of prosperity across the continent, we must work closely with governments,” said Alexandre de Juniac, IATA’s director general and CEO, speaking at the 50th Annual General Assembly (AGA) meeting of the African Airline Association (AFRAA) in Morocco.



Alexandre de Juniac addressing the 50th Annual General Assembly (AGA) meeting of the African Airline Association (AFRAA) in Morocco.

Safety

Safety was highlighted as a positive example of progress through collaboration.

“Africa has had no jet hull losses for two years running and is two years free of any fatalities on any aircraft type, it’s clear that progress is being made. But more needs to be done. We urge governments to recognise the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) in their safety oversight programs. With IOSA carriers performing three times better than airlines not on the IOSA registry, we have a convincing argument. Similarly states must push forward greater adoption of ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPS),” said de Juniac.

Only 24 African states comply with at least 60% of ICAO SARPS. “That is not good enough,” said de Juniac who encouraged states to make global safety standards a top priority.

Closer cooperation with governments

IATA called for an aviation agenda to focus on:

- Improving competitiveness,
- developing effective infrastructure,
- modernising the regulatory framework focusing on global standards and connectivity; and
- ensuring a well-trained and diverse workforce.

Competitiveness

Airlines in Africa, on average, lose \$1.55 for every passenger carried. Establishing competitive cost structures that enable growth and reducing blocked funds are essential to improving the competitiveness of African aviation.



Source: pixabay.com

“Africa is an expensive place for airlines to do business. There is no shortage of examples illustrating the heavy burden that governments extract from aviation. Jet fuel costs are 35% higher than the rest of the world. User charges, as a percentage of airlines’ operating costs, are double the industry average. And taxes and charges are among the highest in the world. On top of that, \$670 million of airline funds are blocked. Too many African governments view aviation as a luxury rather than a necessity. We must change that perception,” said de Juniac.

Infrastructure

“In Africa we have infrastructure problems in two extremes. In some cases it is overbuilt and expensive. In other cases, it is deficient and cannot meet demand. Dialogue between industry and government is critical to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to meet demand, that airline technical and commercial quality standards are met and that the infrastructure is affordable. Achieving that will create the platform on which aviation’s economic and social benefits can be maximized,” said de Juniac.

Harmonised regulation

IATA expressed strong support for the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) initiative.



Source: pixabay.com

“The low density of the African intra-continental network makes it impossible to realize the potential benefits of a connected African economy. SAATM - f implemented - gives Africa the potential for economic transformation. History has shown that opening markets leads to rapid advances in connectivity,” said de Juniac.

To date, 27 African governments have committed to SAATM and IATA encourages the remaining 28 African Union member states to come on board quickly to enjoy the potential benefits of a connected African economy.

Sustainable and gender diverse workforce

Supporting the projected growth of aviation in Africa – a quadrupling of passengers over the next two decades - will require an expanded labour force.

De Juniac called on governments to develop policies to build their training pipeline to support growth and tap into the power of women to help alleviate a growing skills shortage in the region.

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