

IATA forecasts Africa will increase its aviation potential by 2040

Africa's increased airline frequency to the GCC will be explored throughout the inaugural Connect Middle East, India and Africa on 30 April and 1 May - co-located with the 2019 Arabian Travel Market, which takes place at Dubai World Trade Centre from 27 April - 1 May 2019.



Image Supplied.

The potential for the aviation sector in Africa is extensive. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) projects that the African continent will become one of the fastest growing aviation regions within the next 20 years, with an average annual expansion rate of almost 5%.

Currently, there are 731 airports and 419 airlines on the African continent, with the aviation sector supporting around 7 million jobs and generating \$80bn in economic activity. In terms of passenger numbers, 47 million passengers departed from Africa's top five airports, which included Cairo, Addis Ababa and Marrakesh in 2018, according to the latest ANKER report.

"Emirates and Saudia were only responsible for 8 million of those passengers, highlighting the potential for new routes throughout the continent and between the Middle East and Africa. Furthermore, IATA reckons if just 12 key Africa countries opened their markets and increased connectivity, an extra 155,000 jobs and \$1.3bn in annual GDP would be created in those countries," said Nick Pilbeam, divisional director, Reed Travel Exhibitions.

Boosting intra-Africa trade and tourism

The international aviation industry has been monitoring developments in Africa closely, especially since the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) agreement was drawn up in January 2018.

The aim of SAATM is to open up Africa's skies, allowing airlines to fly between any two African cities without having to do so via their home hub airport, boosting intra-Africa trade and tourism as a result. To date, 28 countries out of 55 member states have signed up to SAATM representing over 80% of the existing aviation market in Africa.

However, despite its promising outlook, the sector still faces significant challenges, indeed, protectionist trends have resulted in a rather lacklustre response from many members, concerning competition rules, ownership and control, consumer rights, taxes and commercial viability.

"These mechanics are integral to an open sky treaty and necessary to resolve existing differences between airlines and provide an equitable way forward. Sixteen countries in Africa are landlocked, so the pent-up demand for affordable air transport must be considerable," said Karin Butot, CEO, The Airport Agency.

"These, as well as other salient issues, will no doubt be discussed at length between senior network planning teams and high-level executives representing the aviation and tourism industries, in Africa's as well as the Middle East & Asia, through unlimited one-to-one pre-scheduled networking appointments," added Butot.

Participants include: Emirates, Etihad, China Southern Airlines, Jordan Aviation, Air Asia, flydubai, Gulf Air and Oman Air, EgyptAir, Royal Air Maroc, Air Senegal, AfriJet (Gabon), and Arik Air (Nigeria) amongst others.

Aviation panel discussions

With a focus on the African aviation market, a panel titled *Regional Focus: Analysing the opportunities and threats for the African Market* will take place between 11.30am – 12.30pm on Wednesday, 1 May.

This panel will look at the growth potential of Africa's aviation industry, while discussing strategies in place for the development of airports and airlines within the region as well as evaluating business development opportunities between the Middle East and Africa.

Another highlight will be a session titled *How do airports and their regions work together to attract new airline services and open up new markets: what can be learned from engaging case studies?*.

This panel will discuss the fundamental cooperation of an airport and its region to successfully grow passenger throughput – while ensuring the success of both new and existing routes.

CONNECT Middle East, India and Africa form part of the newly launched Arabian Travel Week, an umbrella brand comprising four co-located shows including ATM 2019; ILTM Arabia and new consumer-led event – ATM Holiday Shopper.