

Advocating for African airlines to become key economic drivers

The African Airlines Association (AFRAA) has advocated for sustainable, interconnected and affordable air transport in Africa where African airlines become key players and drivers to African economic development. According to 2019 AFRAA Annual report, air transport in Africa currently supports 6.2 million jobs and \$55.8bn c GDP and is expected to grow at a rate of 4.6% annually for the next 20 years. This growth in traffic is increasing being matched by route expansion by African airlines.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

In his visit to Senegal, Abdérahmane Berthé held meetings with some aviation stakeholders on developments in the region and took part in the third meeting on the operationalisation of the single African air transport market (SAATM) which was hosted at AFCAC headquarters.

Speaking during a session with media, Abdérahmane Berthé said: "Aviation in Africa is a fast-growing sector that holds great promise for the continent's economic prosperity. African carriers will only become profitable and globally competitive when all stakeholders in the ecosystem adopt best practices that establish a conducive environment to help airlines grow and reclaim Africa's most profitable routes which are currently dominated by foreign carriers."

He added that the association had witnessed the renaissance of the air transport market in West Africa exemplified by the revival of defunct carriers and the rollout of ambitious expansion plans reiterating AFRAA's commitment to supporting carriers in the region realize growth objectives.

Overcoming airline growth challenges

Berthé also highlighted the fact that African airlines still struggle with many challenges including high taxes and charges imposed by governments, poor intra-Africa connectivity and market access limitations, blocked funds which are monies generated by an airline in foreign operations that cannot be moved for any reason as well as overpriced jet fuel just to name a few. These conditions according to data negatively impact on the ability of African airlines to grow their footprint and offer competitive fares to passengers to grow their traffic.

It was noted that Africa's remarkable growth opportunity will be greatly unlocked through regional integration in the continent. The Single Africa Air Transport Market (SAATM), the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA) and the Free Movement Protocol for people and goods are flagship projects which are expected to enhance intra-African connectivity, thereby facilitating travel, trade, tourism, business and socioeconomic development across the continent.

AFRAA whose membership comprises all the major intercontinental African operators representing over 85% of total international traffic continues to implement initiatives geared towards raising safety and security levels, enhancing cooperation among African airlines, addressing airline cost drivers, particularly taxes and user charges, and ensuring there is sufficient infrastructure and skilled staff to support the traffic growth in the continent.

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