

Safely re-establishing Africa's air connectivity is essential to re-building economies

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has urged African governments to take a giant step forward in connecting Africa by accelerating the implementation of the Single Africa Air Transport Market (SAATM) to further boost the post-Covid economic recovery. "The top and immediate priority for aviation in Africa is implementing the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Take-off guidance for safe operations amid the Covid-19 crisis. That is the key to removing the severe restrictions on movement that have grounded much of the continent's air transport industry and severely impacted individual jobs and national economies," said Muhammad Albakri, IATA's regional vice president for Africa and the Middle East.



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"Planning for recovery from Covid-19's economic destruction also presents an opportunity for governments to draw even greater benefits from aviation by opening African borders for African aviation. That transformation change could turbo-charge the recovery by strengthening economic ties and creating jobs in ways that only aviation can achieve."

Safe restart of Aviation

Resuming aviation safely in Africa by implementing ICAO's Take-Off guidance is essential to get the continent's economies up and running. This includes adequate physical distancing, wearing face masks or coverings, enhanced sanitation and disinfection, health screening, contact tracing and the use of passenger health declaration forms.

As of 24 August, Rwanda and Kenya are the only African States in 100% alignment with the ICAO Council's Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) recommendations. Other African States like Ghana and Togo are more than 90% whilst The Gambia is at about 81%. The implementation of global standards is critical in this crisis and essential to safely restore air connectivity as borders and economies re-open.

"This is a positive start, but we are far from restoring the economic catalyst that only aviation can provide. ICAO's Take-off measures are the bedrock for ensuring safe operations and re-building passenger confidence. Africa's governments need to make urgent implementation their top aviation priority," said Albakri.

SAATM

Bold steps will be needed to restart aviation and economies. It is expected that the re-start of aviation will commence in domestic markets, then proceed to regional flying, direct long-haul and finally hub operations.

Africa is at a significant disadvantage due to the severe limits on intra-Africa connectivity. It will miss out of the economic boost from regional connectivity. SAATM is the solution, but only a handful of states have implemented it. While 34 African countries have signed-up for SAATM (representing 75% of African passenger traffic), only ten States have fully implemented the SAATM Concrete measures.

"With SAATM, Africa has a ready-made mechanism to add power to the economic recovery. And it faces a much slower recovery if it relies on hubs outside the continent to re-establish connectivity. Now is the time for the 34 governments that have committed to SAATM to actually implement. And the other governments should make plans to catch-up quickly," said Albakri.

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