

Africa to launch single air transport market in 2018

An African single air transport market will be launched in January 2018, with 40 plus countries expected to be signatories by then. So far, 20 African countries out of 55 have subscribed to African single air market.



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This was announced by David Kajange, the head of the transport and tourism division at the African Union (AU) on the sidelines of the ongoing 29th AU summit, which is underway in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa.

AU's Agenda 2063 goal

A single air transport market is one of the goals of AU's Agenda 2063, aiming to connect Africa through aviation and other transport infrastructure to achieve integration and boost intra-Africa trade.

The single air transport market also aims to boost African nations' tourism, economic growth, and economic development.

Kajange said Africa became the most expensive air transport market in the world because of individual nations' policies and regulations that hinder air connectivity.

According to Euroavia International, a firm specialising in consulting services for airports and aviation industry, air transport in Africa is on average twice as expensive as the world average.

An African Open Skies vision has been there since the 1980s, culminating in the adoption of the Yamassoukro Decision of African Heads of States of November 14, 1999.

However, between 2004 and 2014, despite sustained economic growth on the continent, an increasing business and tourism sector and growing middle class, the market share of African airlines has dropped dramatically.

The loss of market share by African airlines has been estimated by the AU to have been from 60% to below 2%.

Resolving electoral disputes

Meanwhile, the AU is mediating to resolve potential electoral disputes in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) and Gabon.

Commissioner for Political Affairs at the AU, Minata Samate Cessouma said resolving electoral disputes is at the heart of ensuring the welfare of the continent's youth.

DR Congo is facing a protracted political and military crisis mainly triggered by the delay of presidential elections slated first to have been held in 2016 to replace outgoing president Joseph Kabila.



Air transport supports 490,000 jobs, contributes \$12bn to GDP

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Meanwhile, parliamentary elections are scheduled to be held in Gabon on July 29, with opponents to the current president Ali Bongo accusing his government of planning to rig the election.

"Electoral disputes which lead to violence create refugees with youth, children, and women being the main victims," said Cessouma.

Director of Department of Political Affairs at the AU, Khabele Matlosa said that state bodies trusted with holding elections need to effectively work if violence is to be avoided.

In 2017, 18 elections are expected to be held in Africa, in particular like the DR Congo's presidential elections to be keenly watched on whether the continent can move out of electoral violence.

With more than 60 % of Africa's 1 billion plus population being youth, both officials called for an inclusive political process in African countries or risk youth being used as electoral violence tools.

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