

# IATA spotlights five priorities for African aviation industry

By **Jas Ryat** on November, 14 2017 | Airlines & Airports



The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has highlighted five priorities which must be addressed for aviation to deliver maximum economic and social benefits in Africa.

These are: enhancing safety efforts; enabling airlines to improve intra-Africa connectivity; unblocking airline funds; avoiding air traffic management re-fragmentation and over-investment; and ensuring that Africa has the professionals it needs to support the industry's growth.

Aviation supports 6.8 million jobs and contributes US\$72.5 billion in GDP to Africa. Over the next 20 years passenger demand is set to expand by an average of 5.7% annually, according to Alexandre de Juniac, IATA's Director General and CEO.

In a keynote address delivered on de Juniac's behalf by Raphael Kuuchi, IATA Vice President, Africa, to the 49th African Airline's Association Annual (AFRAA) General Assembly in Kigali, Rwanda, he said: "Africa is the region with greatest aviation potential. Over a billion people are spread across this vast continent. Aviation is uniquely placed to link Africa's economic opportunities internally and beyond. And in doing so, aviation spreads prosperity and changes people's lives for the better. That's important for Africa. Aviation can help in achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, including the eradication of poverty and improving both healthcare and education."

De Juniac continued: "Africa also faces great challenges and many airlines struggle to break-even. And, as a whole, the African aviation industry will lose US\$1.50 for each passenger it carries. Governments should be aware that Africa is a high-cost place for aviation. Taxes, fuel and infrastructure charges are higher than the global average. Additionally, insufficient safety oversight, failure to follow global standards, and restrictive air service agreements all add to the burden that stands in the way of aviation's economic and social benefits."

## **Safety**

Safety in Africa has improved. In 2016 there were no passenger fatalities or jet hull losses in Sub-Saharan Africa. When turbo-prop operations are included, Sub-Saharan Africa recorded 2.3 accidents per million flights against a global average of 1.6 accidents per million flights.

"African safety has improved, but there is a gap to close. Global standards such as the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) are the key. Performance statistics for IOSA show that the accident rate of the 33 IOSA registered carriers in Sub-Saharan Africa is half that of carriers not on the registry. That's why I urge African Governments to use IOSA in their safety oversight," said de Juniac.

De Juniac also called for improved government safety oversight, noting that only 22 African states have reached or surpassed the implementation of 60% of the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) standards and recommended practices (SARPs) for safety oversight.

### **Intra-Africa connectivity**

IATA urged the 22 states that have signed up for the Yamoussoukro Decision (which opens intra-Africa aviation markets) to follow through on their commitment. And it further urged governments to progress the African Union's Single Africa Air Transport Market initiative.

"African economic growth is being constrained by a lack of intra-Africa air connectivity. Opportunities are being lost simply because convenient flight connections are not available. While we cannot undo the past, we should not miss out on a bright future," said de Juniac.

### **Blocked funds**

Airlines experience varying degrees of difficulty repatriating revenues earned in Africa from their operations in Angola, Algeria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Libya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sudan and Zimbabwe.

"Practical solutions are needed so that airlines can reliably repatriate their revenues. It's a condition for doing business and providing connectivity," said de Juniac.

### **Air traffic management**

IATA called on African governments to avoid air traffic management re-fragmentation in the face of decisions by Rwanda to leave the Dar-Es-Salaam Flight Information Region (FIR) and South Sudan to leave the Khartoum FIR. "I urge Rwanda and South Sudan to reconsider their decisions," said de Juniac.

IATA also urged industry consultation on air traffic management investment decisions. That will ensure alignment with airline operational needs and avoid over-investment.

### **Human capital**

Supporting that growth will need a much-expanded labor force. "African governments need to collaborate with the industry to better understand the industry's future needs. That will guide the creation of a policy environment to support the development of future talent needed to deliver the benefits of aviation growth," said de Juniac.