

#7AUAgencies Monthly SAATM TRACKER - May

Articles to help you understand Africa's Open Skies Policy, & the journey to fast-track Agenda 2063's flagship Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM)

Compiled *by E K Bensah Jr.*



Expected outcomes of Lome meeting in June 2026

*"The Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), *now with 38 signatories, represents a significant opportunity. However, AFRAA stressed that signatures alone do not create connectivity* and called on Member States to move from ratification to full implementation."*

[https://www.afraa.org/africas-aviation-at-a-defining-moment-progress-made-but-the-road-ahead-remains-demanding/#:~:text=The%20Single%20African%20Air%20Transport%20Market%20\(SAATM\)%2C%20now](https://www.afraa.org/africas-aviation-at-a-defining-moment-progress-made-but-the-road-ahead-remains-demanding/#:~:text=The%20Single%20African%20Air%20Transport%20Market%20(SAATM)%2C%20now)

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Africa's largest refinery ships jet fuel to Europe as Ethiopian Airlines joins supply chain | Business Insider Africa

<https://share.google/wlhFRaPJBxNfcYnc>

Dangote Refinery has begun direct aviation fuel deliveries to Ethiopian Airlines amid tightening global energy markets and geopolitical tensions.

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The refinery says it is operating at full capacity, enabling exports of jet fuel, diesel, and petrol to multiple African and international markets.

Strong margins in Europe and rising crude prices have boosted export demand, even as local airlines face higher operating costs.

The facility continues to position Nigeria as a net exporter of refined products while supporting regional fuel stability.

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/afcac_afcac-saatm-africa-activity-7456251138221309952-dhPG?utm_source=social_share_send&utm_medium=android_app&rcm=ACoAAAD79bMBHf9FtMwzJwpD_dipl4b16Ns4qdw&utm_campaign=whatsapp

#SAATM #agenda2063

<https://capitalethiopia.com/2026/05/03/africas-aviation-moment-iata-urges-governments-to-treat-air-travel-as-economic-infrastructure/>

Of particular concern are passenger data charges such as the API-PNR fee, which in some countries reaches levels far above global norms. *Tanzania, for example, levies an API-PNR charge of 45 US dollars one-way—among the highest in the world—while Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya also exceed international benchmarks*. These fees, the association argues, distort ticket pricing, reduce affordability, and weaken connectivity, contravening ICAO's own guidance.

<https://africa24tv.com/ecowas-report-zoom-africa-more-than-30-destinations-served-by-asky/>

*ASKY plays a key role in African integration despite costs, taxes, and infrastructure challenges. *As a participant in the African Union's Single African Air Transport Market, it supports free trade, tourism, and development. With 15 aircraft (9 Boeing 737-800 and 6 Boeing 737 MAX 8), ASKY currently serves 30 cities in 27 African countries.**

"Asky Airlines *plans to use the new routes to transport passengers not only from Togo, but from across West Africa to Europe* via its hub. If the launch in Paris is successful, industry sources suggest that other major European cities could be added to the flight schedule in the coming years to further diversify the network and increase independence from European carriers."

<https://aviation.direct/en/Asky-Airlines-plans-long-haul-connection-between-Togo-and-Europe#:~:text=Asky%20Airlines%20plans%20to,independence%20from%20European%20carriers.>

*" six leading African airlines including Ethiopian Airlines, Kenya Airways, EGYPTAIR, Royal Air Maroc, RwandAir and ASKY Airlines *were granted approval for UPRs, connecting 30 key city pairs. The shift to UPRs is expected to generate significant annual returns to participating airlines including over 1,393 hours of cumulative flight time saved, cutting 5,000 metric tonnes of*

fuel burn and therefore avoiding some 16,000 metric tonnes of CO2 emissions, and a reduction in annual fuel costs of about US\$ 15 million."*

<https://aircargoweek.com/afraa-rolls-out-free-route-airspace-across-west-central-africa/#:~:text=six%20leading%20African,US%24%2015%20million>

" South Africa remains the continent's largest intra-African aviation market* with 24.6 million seats.*

**Nigeria, Algeria, Mauritius and Madagascar* were among the fastest-growing aviation markets in Africa.*

According to Carlos Cendra, chief marketing officer at Data Appeal: " " _*Africa has a clear medium- to long-term opportunity to leverage growth in both international and regional connectivity to accelerate its tourism sector*._

"In a global market where demand is highly fluid and shifts rapidly in response to the geopolitical environment, *the continent now holds a competitive advantage to emerge as a compelling alternative for travellers seeking sustainable and authentic new experiences.*""

<https://www.zawya.com/en/economy/africa/africa-air-travel-grows-despite-global-aviation-disruption-icf1ho9f#:~:text=South%20Africa%20remains,authentic%20new%20experiences.%E2%80%9D>

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2027 is 25 years since the African Union was established; and the year the AU will be dedicating the whole year to the Single African Air Transport Mechanism (SAATM), which calls for an African Open Sky with manifold African routes, where airline fares are affordable.

In the *second edition of the African Civil Aviation Commission (AfCAC)'s #media sensitization on #SAATM,* that also updated media on #Lome Convention (featuring @afcftasecretariat & @auda_nepad), AfCAC expert Stephen Musa - in a response to my question on strategy around SAATM for 2027 - explained that *"without SAATM", there can be neither #AfCFTA nor freedom of movement.*

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DYVgFxPs-18/?igsh=MXdyZGxlZTE3bTN4OA==>

<https://ecowasbusinessnews.com/blog/2024/11/07/feature-heres-why-what-happens-in-lome-this-week-at-ecowas-transport-summit-cannot-afford-to-stay-in-lome/>

<https://youtu.be/thqbjA2DC-E?si=GBTJWh7BUHOLerhk>

Helps you to understand Aviation's 5 freedoms

*"The *domestication of flights between The Gambia and Senegal presents a*

unique opportunity to transform our airspace into a powerful driver of regional development. Its success depends on close coordination between public and private stakeholders, strong political will, and active involvement from our populations."*

<https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/opinion/the-domestication-of-flights-between-gambia-and-senegal-a-key-step-toward-regional-integration#:~:text=The%20domestication%20of%20flights%20between%20The,and%20active%20involvement%20from%20our%20populations.>

*"Research on *African aviation liberalisation* has consistently shown that opening air markets could *significantly reduce ticket prices while stimulating passenger growth, tourism, and trade*. One study assessing barriers to a single African aviation market estimated that liberalisation *could generate consumer benefits equivalent to a 50–54 per cent reduction in airfares.*"*

For Africa's tourism industry, the stakes are particularly high."

<https://katakanya.org/africas-open-skies-dream-faces-resistance-as-protectionism-keeps-air-travel-expensive/#:~:text=Research%20on%20African,are%20particularly%20high.>

<https://www.sundaytimes.timeslive.co.za/business/2026-05-16-saa-bets>

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[-on-new-routes-in-africa-for-growth/](#)

<https://x.com/i/status/2056740812692881564>

*AFRAA targets FRA rollout in East, Southern Africa: The African Airlines Association (AFRAA) aims to *implement its Free Route Airspace (FRA) project in East Africa and Southern Africa by the end of 2026,* expanding an initiative designed to allow airlines... ch-aviation.com/news/167318-af...*

"The narrative of African aviation has long been plagued by fragmented colonial-era routes and struggling national carriers. Ethiopian Airlines shattered this status quo not by monopolizing the skies, but by sharing its operational blueprint, capital, and most importantly, its executive human resource.

*From *West Africa to the Southern cone, a powerful fraternity of Ethiopian CEOs is actively running the continent's commercial aviation architecture*."*

<https://addisinsight.net/2026/05/19/5-african-airlines-now-led-by-ethiopian-aviation-executives/#:~:text=The%20narrative%20of,commercial%20aviation%20architecture.>

*"She warned that *ambitions under the African Continental Free Trade Area*

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*(AfCFTA) will remain unfulfilled unless governments lift restrictive bilateral air service agreements that hinder cross-border flights.**

*She called for *accelerating the implementation of the Single African Air Transport Market*, one of the African Union's flagship initiatives aimed at liberalizing air transport services across the continent, in order to boost trade, investment, and economic integration.*

Adeyemi emphasized that *strengthening air connectivity is a prerequisite for increasing intra-African trade flows, particularly as high-value and time-sensitive goods require efficient cross-border movement*."

<https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/569278/World/Region/Air-transport-liberalization-key-to-intraAfrican-t.aspx#:~:text=She%20warned%20that,cross%2Dborder%20movement.>

Ahead of the #AfCAC air convention in #Lome, Togo, in June 2026, *Togo has made the country #visaFree to all Africans.*

Exciting news in Africa Month!

Togo is home to @asky_airlines and @ecobank_group, but also home of ECOWAS Bank of Investment & Development (EBID).

#SAATM

#SAATMMedia

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<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DYjiOaGMR-P/?igsh=MWVjZTRtN3N5bDk1dW==>

Source: *"Happenings in Africa." Interview of SG of AfCAC Adefunke Adegemi at AfCFTA Secretariat's Biashara Forum that just ended in Lome, Togo.*

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#SAATMMedia

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DYoyrczMxAN/?igsh=Y3VsNTZsc3VoczFv>

Connectivity to drive AfCFTA, AfCAC Head says

<https://www.newsday.co.zw/business/article/200055679/connectivity-to-drive-afcfta-afcac-head-says>

#SAATM #Kigali

Commit and call for action

1. To accelerate the full domestication of YD/SAATM provisions into national laws and Air Services Agreements.
2. To remove unjustified restrictions on traffic rights and ensure fair competition and consumer protection through the Dispute Settlement Mechanism.

3. To promote the domestication of the air transport market at the regional levels.
4. To adopt a harmonised regional/continental framework to reduce excessive taxes, high fees, and charges that hinder competitiveness.
5. To mobilise investment in aviation infrastructure, hubs, and connectivity, leveraging Development Finance Institutions, public-private partnerships, and donor support.
6. To strengthen AFCAC's institutional capacity as the Executing Agency of SAATM through sustainable financing and political backing.
7. To endorse the designation of SAATM as the AU Theme of the Year 2027, elevating it to the highest political level.
8. To support the appointment of Regional SAATM Champions at the Heads of State level to sustain continental advocacy and coordination.
9. To engage with non-implementing States to ensure universal participation and integration of Africa's air transport market

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*"On February 24, 2026, ICAO formally handed over to the Ghana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) the results of a SAF feasibility study conducted under its ACT-SAF programme – a global initiative launched in 2022 to help member states develop and deploy sustainable aviation fuels. *The study, funded by the UK Department for Transport and launched in May 2025, concluded that Ghana holds strong potential for SAF production*."*

<https://newsaero.info/institutions/green-aviation-accra-signs-with-ottawa-and-wins-icaos-endorsement-of-its-saf-potential?true=9961#:~:text=On%20February%2024,for%20SAF%20production.>

<https://newsaero.info/institutions/west-africa-introduces-new-air-travel-levy-to-fund-aviation-safety-oversight?true=8638>

** new 1usd levy took off Jan 2026**

“Strategic infrastructure should be built around the largest and most resilient market. In Africa, that market is Africans.”

voyagesafriq.com/2026/03/08/bui...

In my latest column for @VoyagesAfriq, I look at the often incoherent strategy that African nations have when investing in aviation and tourism infrastructure.

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Too often, modernisation is interpreted as building impressive new terminals or ambitious hub projects designed to attract long haul traffic from Europe, and to rival temples of opulence in the Gulf or Asia. Yet the less glamorous foundations of aviation infrastructure, such as reliable air navigation systems, efficient visa processing, affordable airport charges and strong regional connectivity, are frequently neglected.

If we want aviation and tourism to grow sustainably, infrastructure must be designed around the people most likely to use it: Africans travelling within Africa. The next wave of growth will not come only from flights to London, Dubai or Beijing. It will come from traders, students, entrepreneurs, families and tourists moving across our own continent.

<https://x.com/i/status/2052373341168685351>

My comments to @Graphicgh about the plans for yet another national airline in Ghana.

Aviation Expert and former Chief Operations Officer of Africa World Airlines, Sean Mendis... argued that Accra's fundamentals are already stronger than policymakers often assume.

The city, he noted, *had quietly established itself as a preferred entry point into the sub-region*, underpinned by a relatively stable operating environment and *efficient airport infrastructure*.

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“* _Ghana is already the preferred gateway of choice to West Africa for pretty much every airline_*,” he said, pointing to an existing competitive edge that could be leveraged (with existing operators) rather than built from scratch.

Re-Imagining SAATM: A Third Voice on Africa's Journey Toward Open Skies

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/re-imagining-saatm-third-voice-africas-journey-toward-sibusiso-maneli-rftmf?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_android&utm_campaign=share_via

I argue that *SAATM only becomes meaningful when it connects to real economic activity. Air transport does not create demand it enables it. Policy ambition therefore, has to align with where production is clustering, where cargo flows originate, where services grow, and where regional value chains are forming.*

FROM VISA BARRIERS TO OPEN SKIES: Unlocking Africa's Travel Revolution

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/from-visa-barriers-open-skies-unlocking-africas-travel-revolution-e6b7e?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_android&utm_campaign=share_via

*Africa stands at *the threshold of a travel revolution. The gradual removal of visa barriers, combined with improved air connectivity and stronger regional cooperation, has the potential to unlock unprecedented economic growth, enhance mobility,* and position the continent as a global travel hub.*

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"The **Integrated Aviation Transformation Programme for Africa* is designed as a comprehensive continent-wide initiative to attract private, institutional, and concessional financing for the sector*. *It seeks to address the *underperformance of African aviation, which currently accounts for less than 3 percent of global air traffic* despite the continent being home to nearly 18 percent of the world's population.*"

<https://clarionnewschannel.com/afdb-appoints-nigerias-festus-keyamo-as-champion-of-7-billion-african-aviation-transformation-programme/#:~:text=The%20Integrated%20Aviation,the%20world%E2%80%99s%20population.>

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/amine-ammour-a90367226_networkdev-airalgerie-share-7464911592174862337-0yuw?utm_source=social_share_send&utm_medium=android_app&rcm=ACoAAAD79bMBHf9FtMwzJwpD_dipl4b16Ns4qdw&utm_campaign=whatsapp

A good piece helping us understand how **Air Algeria** is slowly becoming a hub...

The Sky Africa Built, And Then Closed

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/sky-africa-built-closed-sableafrica-orose?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_android&utm_campaign=share_via

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The strategic logic Qatar is executing is what analysts have termed an "Agile Power" model: invest in infrastructure and regional carriers, let them handle the short and medium-haul complexity, and position Doha as the indispensable intercontinental connector. *Ethiopian builds ecosystems it can manage. Qatar builds corridors it can monetise.*

A very insightful piece updating us on the latest in Africa's aviation. Writer is pessimistic about SAATM, preferring AfCAC to sanction non-compliance of Bilateral Air Services Agreements (BASAs), which it believes should "be retired".

Watch out for *Addis vs Doha* as Africa builds its pilots and infrastructure. African pilots might be lost to the more lucrative Doha over time...

THE AFRICAN LENS | Episode 5

**** Air Connectivity as Economic Infrastructure ****

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/african-lens-episode-5-air-connectivity-economic-alloysius-mukong-gyjhf?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_android&utm_campaign=share_via

ENDs

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