



"Better Skies for Africa"

AFRAA Position Paper- Liberalisation of the African Skies

Introduction:

The beginning of the liberalization of the African Skies was ushered in by the Yamoussoukro Declaration of 1988 when the African Aviation Ministers met and came up with a solution for the African Aviation Industry. The Declaration was specific to the New African Air Transport Policy and enjoined African states to embrace the need for opening up the African airspace to each other. This was after extensive dialogue and consultations in recognition of the evolving global aviation landscape. Open Skies, as liberalization is often called, gained momentum in different regions at different times and it was opportune for Africa to find its solution for the same phenomenon.

AFRAA has evaluated the various studies on the benefits of liberalization and has concluded that they outweigh the challenges as has been demonstrated in other regions of the world.

AFRAA approach - Understanding liberalization

There have been many initiatives undertaken by various entities to ensure that Africa achieves liberalization of access to air transport markets in line with what pertains in other regions of the world. However, the realization by the African Union that there is a need for a concerted effort to unify all the initiatives to realise the open skies is significant in many ways. Africa is not alone in its quest for liberalization as can be seen from the open skies regimes that have been established in other regions of the world. The Yamoussoukro Decision, which in effect is the ultimate liberalization of the African Skies, when fully implemented brings significant benefits to African airlines such as but not limited to the following:

- Unrestricted designation of airlines for routes
- Capacity and frequency are not limited
- Safety and security are non-negotiable
- Rights are granted from 3rd to 6th freedom where required
- Flexibility in routing and allocation of gauge to meet demand
- Cargo gets opportunity for 7th freedom operations
- Charter operations are handled on a need basis without restrictive policies
- Airlines can pursue cod-share and other commercial agreements
- User charges are transparent and service providers compete fairly for business
- Provision for fair competition and consumer protection

Liberalisation provides an enabling environment for countries and or airlines to enter into agreements that provide maximum cooperation in the form of commercial and operational flexibility. These commercial agreements enable airlines to pursue the opportunities that come with unlimited access to markets because of their ability to operate to any intermediate destinations en-





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route to their final destinations thereby making convenient and affordable intra-Africa travel a reality.

Single African Air Transport Market

The AU’s Agenda 2063 identified the full implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision in order to create the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) as one its flagship projects. Since the launch of the SAATM in January 2018, 33 AU member states have signed their solemn commitment.

What is expected?

The implementation of the YD under the SAATM consolidates the multi-faceted benefits that have been well documented in numerous studies. The benefits to the consumer include the following:

- Increased frequencies and capacity
- Lower fares due to competition
- Wider choice of destinations
- Increased intra-Africa mobility for their goods and services
- Access to all African markets for enhanced trading

Conclusion:

With the increased and accelerated signing of the solemn commitment by more African Union states, there is an improved perception of the Africa aviation market under the Single African Air Transport Market. No doubt there are still challenges that need to be addressed to enable the non-signatory states to sign their solemn commitments and embrace the SAATM.

AFRAA, in line with the directives of their Executive Committee will continue to collaborate with their stakeholders, mainly AFCAC, the AUC, and IATA to ensure that the momentum of liberalization under the SAATM is maintained whilst addressing the concerns of AFRAA member airlines. African Airlines are encouraged to participate in AFRAA initiatives such as Capacity Building Workshops on SAATM for Airlines where the concerns of airlines will be collated and presented to the appropriate stakeholders for their resolution. At the same time AFRAA and its partner stakeholders continue to encourage African airlines to implement the YD in line with the SAATM .

