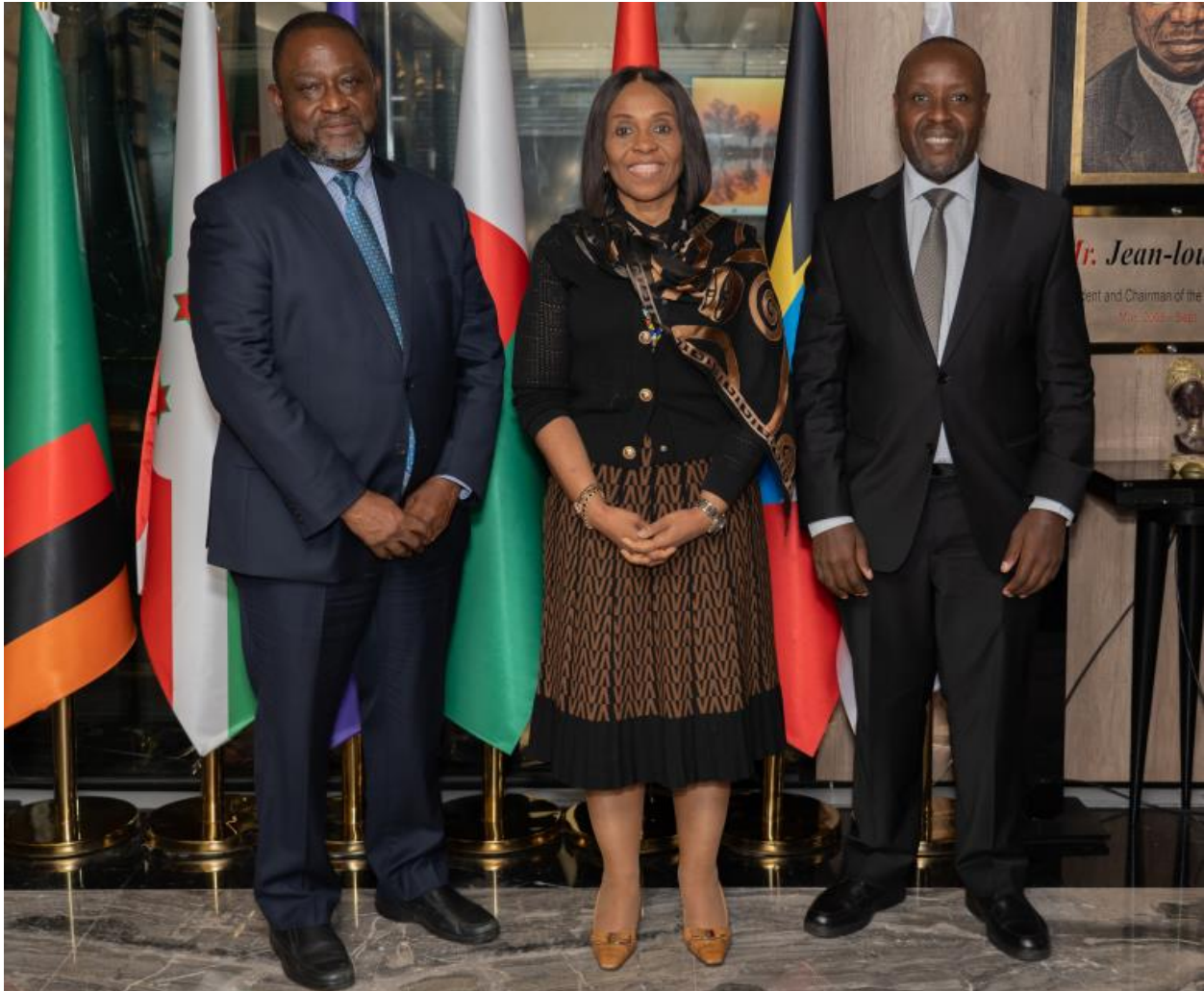


AFRAA Marks New Era of African Aviation as Free Route Airspace Takes Flight in West and Central Africa



Nairobi, Kenya, – November 2025: – The African Airlines Association (AFRAA) heralds a transformative milestone in African aviation with the full operational deployment of Free Route Airspace (FRA) in the Western and Central Africa (WACAF) region, effective 30 October 2025.

This landmark achievement, transitioning from successful trials initiated in November 2023, will allow any airline to plan and fly more direct User Preferred Routes (UPRs), significantly enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of air travel across the continent.

UPRs allow airlines to fly the most fuel-efficient and timely paths based on current conditions, rather than having to follow fixed, conventional routes, giving the pilots more flexibility and



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enabling them to adjust to factors like weather and winds, leading to reduced fuel consumption, shorter flight times and lower carbon emissions.

African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) has supported the FRA initiative since the trials began in 2023, in accordance with its Memorandum of Understanding with AFRAA and in line with the Global Air Navigation Plan of the International Civil Aviation Organisation and the conclusions of the Africa-India (AFI) FRA Planning and Implementation Regional Group.

The deployment of the FRA represents a decisive step resulting from a collaborative effort between air operators and air navigation service providers (ANSPs) who reached a consensus at a joint workshop in Dakar, Senegal to conclude the trial phase and move to full implementation.

"The implementation of Free Route Airspace in the WACAF region is a game-changer for African aviation," said **Mr. Abdérahmane Berthé, AFRAA Secretary General**. "This is a testament to what we can achieve through collaboration. By cutting flight times and fuel consumption, we are not only boosting the competitiveness and profitability of our airlines but also making a significant commitment to environmental sustainability. We extend our profound gratitude to Afreximbank and all stakeholders who have journeyed with us for their unwavering commitment to this vision: the Western and Central African Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs), Agence pour la Sécurité de la Navigation Aérienne en Afrique et à Madagascar (ASECNA), Ghana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA), Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA), Régie des Voies Aériennes (RVA), Roberts Flight Information Region (Roberts FIR), The International Air Transport Association (IATA), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the Civil Air Navigation Services Organization (CANSO)."

While commenting on the FRA initiative, **Mrs. Kanayo Awani, Executive Vice President, Intra-African Trade and Export Development, Afreximbank**, said: "Efficient, safe, and well-regulated air services are critical to facilitating intra-African trade, tourism and connectivity in line with the objectives of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Afreximbank is fully committed to supporting the full implementation of SAATM and the establishment of an effective and efficient aviation industry through a range of financing instruments, including its aircraft leasing platform as well as trade facilitation interventions.

Substantial Benefits for Launch Airlines

In a powerful demonstration of the initiative's potential, 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.



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A Free Route Airspace for all

Crucially, the WACAF airspace is now open for free routes. Starting 30 October 2025, any airline can plan and operate User Preferred Routes. The region's ANSPs have committed to approving newly requested UPR within 48 hours. Furthermore, following final administrative work by the 24 WACAF States, this process will be further streamlined, with approvals no longer required for new UPR requests from mid-2026.

A Continent-wide Vision for the Future

The success in WACAF paves the way for the next phase of continental integration. The focus for 2026 will shift to the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESAF) airspace to conclude trials and achieve a similar FRA implementation. The region is also committed to developing a web-based coordination platform to streamline operations for airlines and ANSPs.

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About AFRAA

The African Airlines Association, also known by its acronym AFRAA, is a trade association of airlines from the member states of the African Union (AU). Founded in Accra, Ghana, in April 1968, and headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, AFRAA's mission is to promote, serve African Airlines and champion Africa's aviation industry. The Association envisions a sustainable, interconnected, and affordable Air Transport industry in Africa, where African Airlines become key players and drivers of African economic development. AFRAA membership cuts across the entire continent and includes all the major intercontinental African operators. The Association members represent over 85% of total international traffic carried by African airlines.

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About Afreximbank

African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) is a Pan-African multilateral financial institution mandated to finance and promote intra- and extra-African trade. For over 30 years, the Bank has been deploying innovative structures to deliver financing solutions that support the transformation of the structure of Africa's trade, accelerating industrialization and intra-regional trade, thereby boosting economic expansion in Africa. A stalwart supporter of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), Afreximbank has launched a Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) that was adopted by the African Union (AU) as the payment and settlement platform to underpin the implementation of the AfCFTA. Working with the AfCFTA Secretariat and the AU, the Bank has set up a US\$10 billion Adjustment Fund to support countries effectively participating in the AfCFTA. At the end of December 2024, Afreximbank's total assets and contingencies stood at over US\$40.1 billion, and its shareholder funds amounted to US\$7.2 billion. Afreximbank has



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investment grade ratings assigned by GCR (international scale) (A), Moody's (Baa2), China Chengxin International Credit Rating Co., Ltd (CCXI) (AAA), Japan Credit Rating Agency (JCR) (A-) and Fitch (BBB-). Afreximbank has evolved into a group entity comprising the Bank, its equity impact fund subsidiary called the Fund for Export Development Africa (FEDA), and its insurance management subsidiary, AfrexInsure (together, "the Group"). The Bank is headquartered in Cairo, Egypt.

For more information, visit: www.afreximbank.com

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