



WORKING PAPER

**SEVENTH WORLDWIDE AIR TRANSPORT CONFERENCE
(ATCONF/7)**

Montréal, HQ, 16 to 20 November 2026

**Agenda Item 4: Emerging technologies, new business models and other associated aspects
4.3: Leveraging air transport data and the digital ecosystem for seamless, secure and resilient operations**

**AVIATION DATA AND EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING: FOUNDATION FOR AIR
TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT**

(Presented by Kenya on behalf of 54 Member States of the African Civil Aviation Commission²)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This working paper presents Africa's position on aviation data, common indicators and evidence-based policymaking. It demonstrates how the continent is already building the systems needed to measure, monitor and deliver its air transport commitments. The commitments made under the Yamoussoukro Decision (YD), the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) and the Lomé Declaration on liberalization, connectivity, affordability, accessibility and sustainability can only be verified and delivered if they rest on reliable data, harmonized reporting and comparable indicators. Aviation data in Africa remains fragmented, incomplete and untimely. Africa cannot manage, monitor or demonstrate what it cannot measure. Through the African Programme on Aviation Data (APAD), coordinated by AFCAC, African States have established a continental programme with a panel of experts, harmonized statistical instruments, a key performance indicator framework, an annual reporting cycle and a shared data platform, now under development, to close this gap. Building on this experience, the paper invites the Conference to support the development of common global indicators, regional aviation data platforms and observatories, harmonized data collection and timely reporting, and strengthened capacity, in cooperation with AFCAC.

Action: The conference is invited to:

- a) recognize that reliable, harmonized and timely aviation data and common indicators are essential for air transport development, economic oversight, investment and monitoring liberalization outcomes, particularly in developing regions;
- b) request ICAO to develop common global indicators for connectivity, affordability, accessibility, traffic growth and liberalization outcomes, drawing on regional frameworks, including the SAATM and APAD indicators;
- c) request ICAO to support the strengthening of capacity-building for aviation data management, reporting and evidence-based policymaking; and

¹ English and French versions provided by AFCAC.

² Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

d) invite ICAO to strengthen cooperation with AFCAC and African States in implementing APAD, harmonizing data standards and reporting practices, and developing sustainable regional mechanisms for aviation data collection, sharing and analysis.	
<i>Strategic Goal:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Goal: <i>The Economic Development of Air Transport Assures the Delivery of Economic Prosperity and Societal Well-Being for All.</i>
<i>Financial implications:</i>	The proposed actions are expected to be pursued within ICAO's existing work programme and available resources.
<i>References:</i>	Lomé Declaration on the Single African Air Transport Market and its Implementation Matrix, 2026 ICAO Long-Term Vision for International Air Transport Liberalization ICAO Statistics Programme; iSTARS and ICAO Data+ Doc 9587, <i>Policy and Guidance Material on the Economic Regulation of International Air Transport</i> African Union, AU Data Policy Framework, 2022 AFCAC/IATA Continental Study on the Benefits of SAATM Air Transport Action Group (ATAG), <i>Aviation: Benefits Beyond Borders — Africa</i>, 2023 AFCAC, African Programme on Aviation Data (APAD), Programme Reports Doc 10227, <i>Assembly Resolutions in Force (As of 3 October 2025)</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Every policy decision in air transport, whether to open a route, license an operator, set a charge, appraise an airport investment or measure the benefits of liberalization, ultimately rests on data. Aviation statistics are not an administrative by-product. They are the instrument through which regulators, planners and investors see the market, and through which States hold themselves and one another accountable for the commitments they make. In an increasingly digital air transport ecosystem, the capacity to collect, validate, share and analyze reliable data has become as much a part of a state's aviation infrastructure.

1.2 For Africa, this capacity is decisive. The continent's commitments under the Yamoussoukro Decision, the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), Agenda 2063 and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) are, at their core, promises about outcomes which include but are not limited to more routes, lower fares and wider market access. These must be measured if they are to be delivered. African aviation market is projected to grow strongly over the coming decades. Whether that potential is realized, and whether reform delivers, can only be established based on evidence.

1.3 In June 2026, African Ministers meeting at the African Air Transport Convention and Expo in Lomé reaffirmed through the Lomé Declaration and its Implementation Matrix the importance of data-driven, evidence-based decision-making in support of liberalization, connectivity and affordability. The Declaration urged accelerated implementation of YD and SAATM and recognized that digital transformation and data-driven monitoring are essential to achieving these objectives.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Data is the backbone for monitoring and delivering Africa's commitments

2.2.1. Commitments to liberalization, connectivity, affordability, accessibility and sustainability can only be properly monitored and delivered when they are supported by reliable data, common indicators and evidence-based decision-making. The economic case for liberalization in Africa is itself a product of data.

Modelling for the AFCAC Continental Study estimates that full implementation of SAATM could generate some 15.9 million additional passenger trips, increase intra-African traffic by about 51 per cent, reduce fares by around 26 per cent (a saving of the order of USD 1.46 billion per year) and open more than 145 new country-pair routes. Without robust data systems, such benefits cannot be tracked, verified or translated into policy.

2.2.2. AFCAC's latest data show encouraging progress in African air transport, driven by the implementation of SAATM. The number of SAATM States has reached 38, the share of fifth-freedom traffic increased to 23 per cent in 2025, and 124 new intra-African routes had been established by March 2026. Safety oversight performance has also improved, with the continental Effective Implementation rate reaching 68.1 per cent in May 2026. These advances demonstrate growing commitment to liberalization, connectivity and safety, while highlighting the need for sustained implementation, investment and regulatory cooperation

2.2.3. Data also underpins economic regulation, consumer protection, competition monitoring, safety and security oversight, and the appraisal of infrastructure and investment. Data-driven oversight should become a practical, everyday instrument of implementation rather than an occasional exercise. Decisions on routes, capacity, charges and investment must rest on a common, trusted evidence base.

2.2 Africa faces a persistent aviation data gap

2.2.1. Aviation data in Africa is often fragmented, incomplete, inconsistent and difficult to access. Traffic, financial and operational records held by civil aviation authorities, airports, air navigation service providers and airlines frequently diverge. Many States lack the systems and capacity to collect, validate, analyze and report aviation data in a timely and harmonized manner. This weakens planning, economic oversight, investment appraisal and the monitoring of connectivity and affordability. It also undermines the credibility of the continent's evidence base in global fora.

2.2.2. Statistical reporting across Africa remains uneven in timeliness, accuracy and completeness, limiting benchmarking and evidence-based policymaking. Under APAD, only about 18 AFCAC Member States submitted ICAO air transport reporting forms in 2023–2024, as few as one reported systematically in 2025, and nine had submitted data by August 2026. These figures reflect structural capacity and coordination gaps that require stronger national statistical functions, harmonized definitions and reporting discipline, supported by a coordinated continental programme rather than fragmented national effort.

2.3 Common global set of indicators for the outcomes

2.3.1. At present there is no single, globally agreed set of indicators for measuring air connectivity, affordability, accessibility, route viability, traffic growth and liberalization outcomes. Existing connectivity measures are partial or proprietary and are not consistently comparable across regions. Common, comparable global indicators would strengthen evidence-based policymaking worldwide and allow regions such as Africa to benchmark progress and demonstrate the results of reform.

2.3.2. Africa offers practical reference points. The SAATM Pilot Implementation Project already uses a set of critical performance indicators, an online Yamoussoukro Decision and SAATM monitoring questionnaire and periodic reporting to measure implementation, including progress on fifth-freedom operations. Building on this, APAD is developing a continental Key Performance Indicator Framework covering traffic, capacity, connectivity, competition and market structure, operational and safety performance, data compliance and quality, and SAATM monitoring. It includes an explicit hierarchy of data sources: official Member State data as the primary source, validated third-party data as complementary, and approved estimation or modelling only as a last resort. These indicators can directly inform the design of a comparable global framework.

2.4 The African Programme on Aviation Data (APAD)

2.4.1. Africa's response to the data gap is operational, not aspirational. APAD, established by AFCAC in 2022, is a continental programme through which Member States collaborate to close the data gap, strengthen national statistical capacity, standardize reporting and build a comprehensive continental database. It is steered by a Panel of Experts drawn from civil aviation authorities, airports, air navigation service providers and airline bodies, supported by a Bureau and the AFCAC Secretariat. The Panel has met four times between 2022 and 2026, alongside capacity-building workshops that brought experts from African States with ICAO, African Airlines Association (AFRAA), International Air Transport Association (IATA) and Airports Council International (ACI) Africa. APAD has moved from principles to instruments. It has adopted the ICAO Air Transport Reporting Forms as the basis for data collection, avoiding duplication, and developed harmonized instruments: a Model Guideline on Aviation Statistics for States, a State Consent Template for data sharing, an Annual Statistical Submission Calendar and Reminder Cycle with a defined escalation procedure, and the APAD Key Performance Indicator Framework and Definitions with a submission monitoring scorecard. Aligned with the African Union Data Policy Framework and designed to connect to ICAO's statistical systems and analytical tools — the ICAO Statistics Programme, iSTARS and ICAO Data+ — they give States a ready-made, interoperable framework rather than requiring each to build its own.

2.4.2. At the centre of the programme is a continental aviation data platform — web-based, accessible in low-bandwidth environments, owned by AFCAC and interoperable with ICAO's systems — through which States and airports submit data under a State-level approval process before onward reporting. Its development, taken forward through donor support, covers a strategic and governance framework, a minimum continental aviation dataset, harmonized standards and quality assurance, a data warehouse and online reporting system, dashboards and country profiles, and structured capacity-building, with ownership retained by AFCAC and full transfer of methodologies to avoid vendor dependence. APAD illustrates both the promise and the requirements of an African-led data system. It shows that a continental programme can standardize reporting, pool scarce expertise and give States common tools; it also shows what such a system needs to succeed — formal adoption of its instruments by States, sustained reporting compliance, a clear legal basis for the collection and sharing of data, and a sustainable financing mechanism. These are precisely the areas in which coordinated global support would have the greatest effect.

2.5 Complementary roles of ICAO and regional institutions

2.5.1 ICAO and regional institutions have complementary roles: ICAO provides global standards for aviation data, common indicators, analytical tools and capacity-building, while regional institutions translate these into arrangements suited to regional circumstances. Strengthening States' capacity to collect, validate, analyse, report and use data is essential and should be treated as a development priority, not a secondary activity. The Lomé Declaration (2026) specifically called for strengthened data-driven monitoring of air transport development in Africa, reflecting the continent's determination to move from political commitments to measurable outcomes. Africa's experience with APAD demonstrates that, given the right tools, frameworks and support, States can and do improve their data systems.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 Reliable data and common indicators are decisive for the next phase of African air transport development. They are how liberalization, connectivity and affordability will be monitored and delivered, and the foundation of sound economic regulation and investment. Africa's data gap must be closed if its commitments are to be measurable and its positions evidence-based. Africa seeks common global indicators, support for African-led data platforms and observatories, harmonized data collection and timely reporting, and strengthened capacity. Through APAD it has already shown what such a system can look

like; a stronger global framework, combined with regional coordination led by AFCAC, would enable Africa to measure, benchmark and demonstrate the results of air transport reform.

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