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# AFRICAN AIR TRANSPORT CONVENTION & EXPO 2026

*One African Sky: Connectivity and Sustainable Air Transport Development*  
Lomé, Republic of Togo | 15-19 June 2026

## LOMÉ DECLARATION | IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX | CONTINENTAL ACTION AGENDA

Convened under the High Patronage of H.E. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, President of the  
Council of the Republic of Togo, and  
Champion of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM)

## Executive Summary

The inaugural African Air Transport Convention & Expo 2026 brought together political leaders, ministers, continental institutions, regulators, industry stakeholders, development finance institutions, and technical partners around a shared goal: turning Africa's aviation commitments into tangible results for citizens and economies. Organized by the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) in partnership with the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat, and the African Union Development Agency - New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD), under the High Patronage of H.E. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, President of the Council of Ministers of Togo and Champion of SAATM, the Convention attracted 954 participants, including 24 Honourable Ministers and 32 Directors General, along with an Expo featuring 47 exhibitors across 62 stands showcasing aviation solutions, services, technologies, infrastructure opportunities, training initiatives, digital innovations, and partnership prospects. The main message was clear: progress must now be visible in the routes established, rights exercised, costs reduced, border restrictions eased, projects funded, and passengers and cargo moved.

The Convention adopted the Lomé Declaration and its Implementation Matrix to promote accessible, connected, affordable, and sustainable air transport across Africa. It also launched the AFCAC Solidarity Commitment 2026-2028 as a resource-mobilization initiative to strengthen AFCAC's capacity as the AU's specialized agency for civil aviation and the Executing Agency of SAATM. Ministers are committed to removing restrictive market-access barriers; aligning air services agreements with SAATM; rationalizing taxes, fees, and charges; expanding visa openness and digital facilitation; building AfCFTA-linked cargo corridors; preparing bankable aviation infrastructure and sustainable fuel projects; and enhancing technology, skills, inclusion, and institutional accountability. Dedicated private sector sessions, organized jointly by Afreximbank, AfDB and AFCAC, deepened engagement on aviation investment, financing opportunities, and partnerships. Bilateral air services agreements negotiated and signed during the event provided practical expression to SAATM and the expansion of African connectivity. These outcomes also establish Africa's consolidated platform for ICAO ATConf/7 in November 2026 and lay the groundwork for implementing the AU Theme of the Year 2027 on SAATM and technology.

## Priority Outcomes at a Glance

| Priority               | Continental Outcome                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Market access</b>   | Operationalize SAATM through aligned air services agreements, Fifth Freedom rights, predictable authorizations, and priority routes.                           |
| <b>Affordability</b>   | Implement the Continental Taxes, Fees and Charges (TFC) Policy Framework; eliminate duplicative or non-cost-related charges and publish transparent cost data. |
| <b>Mobility</b>        | Advance visa-free, visa-on-arrival and interoperable e-visa measures; strengthen Annex 9, API/PNR and digital border systems.                                  |
| <b>Trade and cargo</b> | Develop AfCFTA-linked cargo corridors, modern customs processes, cold chains, logistics hubs and a continental cargo dashboard.                                |
| <b>Investment</b>      | Convert infrastructure gaps into phased, climate-resilient and bankable projects supported by PPPs and blended finance.                                        |

| Priority                     | Continental Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Sustainability</b>        | Build harmonized SAF/LCAF frameworks, investable value chains, aggregated demand and credible offtake arrangements.                                                                                                             |
| <b>Technology and talent</b> | Accelerate digital aviation, cybersecurity, interoperable CNS/ATM and skills development, with measurable inclusion of women and youth.                                                                                         |
| <b>Women and youth</b>       | Africa's aviation sector commits to measurable inclusion targets, modernized, portable qualifications, and a strengthened AWAYA platform to accelerate women's and youth participation across all aviation roles.               |
| <b>Resource mobilization</b> | Mobilize financial contributions, technical assistance and in-kind support through the AFCAC Solidarity Commitment 2026-2028 to strengthen AFCAC's delivery capacity without creating new statutory obligations or assessments. |

## 1. Background and Purpose

AFCAC, in collaboration with the AUC, AfCFTA Secretariat and AUDA-NEPAD, convened the first African Air Transport Convention & Expo in Lomé, Republic of Togo, from 15 to 19 June 2026 under the high Patronage of H.E Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, Champion of SAATM. The Convention was anchored in Agenda 2063, the YD and SAATM, and was designed as a continental platform for political direction, policy alignment, investment mobilisation, commercial partnership and implementation.

The Convention brought together H.E. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda; Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; Ministers responsible for aviation, transport, trade, tourism, finance and internal affairs; Directors General of Civil Aviation; continental and regional institutions; the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); financial institutions; airlines; airports; Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs); Original Equipment Manufacturers; cargo and logistics operators; technology and training providers; academia; diplomatic missions; media and civil society. In all, over 950 participants, including 24 Honourable Ministers and 32 Directors General, attended the event. The Expo brought together 47 exhibitors across 62 stands, showcasing aviation solutions, services, technologies, infrastructure opportunities, training initiatives, digital innovations and partnership possibilities. This breadth of participation reflected the reality that air transport reform is a whole-of-government and whole-of-market undertaking.

## 2. Strategic Scope

- Accelerating SAATM implementation and corridor-based route development;
- Advancing seamless mobility and facilitation for trade, tourism and free movement;
- Reducing the cost of air travel while strengthening fair competition and consumer welfare;
- Developing air cargo and logistics corridors for AfCFTA value chains;
- Mobilising investment for aviation infrastructure, services and industrial capacity;
- Deepening structured private sector engagement and aviation financing partnerships, including through Afreximbank-supported investment dialogue;
- Facilitating negotiation and signature of bilateral air services agreements and related market-access instruments that support SAATM implementation;
- Deploying innovation, technology and human capital for a future-ready sector;

- i. Building sustainable, climate-resilient aviation and African Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF)/Low-Carbon Aviation Fuel (LCAF) capabilities; and
- j. Building an inclusive, mobile and future-ready aviation workforce by closing gender and youth gaps.

### 3. High-Level Political Direction

In his opening address, H.E. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé called for performance to be measured through new approaches, lower costs, simplified travel, and increased trade. He outlined four priorities: accelerate SAATM through aligned air service agreements, effective traffic rights, and priority corridors; improve affordability with transparent charges and digital facilitation; position aviation and cargo as catalysts for AfCFTA and productive transformation; and build a resilient, innovative, and sustainable ecosystem supported by modern infrastructure, investment, strong institutions, and skilled personnel. The opening segment thus framed a single African sky as a tool for development, integration, and strategic sovereignty.

President Paul Kagame, in his address, emphasised the need to address the core issues of taxes and charges levied on air travel across Africa, which remain among the highest worldwide, raising ticket prices and restricting passenger growth. He underlined that lowering those costs is crucial for the continent to expand air travel and boost competitiveness.

H. E. Kagame also highlighted Rwanda as an example, emphasising the country's visa-on-arrival policy for all Africans and other travellers as part of efforts to eliminate barriers and boost economic activity. He called for increased regulatory harmony among African nations, stating that travelling within African cities should not require leaving Africa.

Chief Olusegun Obasanjo positioned air transport as a key infrastructure for Africa's integration, trade, tourism, mobility, and prosperity. He urged full implementation of SAATM, reduction of aviation taxes and charges, strengthening of regulatory institutions, facilitation of cross-border movement, and closer coordination between air connectivity, trade corridors, tourism strategies, and regional value chains. His main point was practical: Africa already has the frameworks and institutions; disciplined execution must now open routes, lower costs, and boost trade.

### 4. Proceedings and Session Outcomes

#### Ministerial Declaration Session

The ministerial segment adopted the Lomé Declaration and Implementation Matrix as the principal political and accountability framework for post-Lomé delivery. During this session, AFCAC launched the AFCAC Solidarity Commitment 2026-2028, a resource-mobilisation initiative to strengthen the Commission's capacity as the AU specialised agency for civil aviation and as the Executing Agency of SAATM.

The Commitment is designed to mobilise direct financial contributions, technical assistance and in-kind support to enable AFCAC to support Member States more effectively, accelerate SAATM implementation and advance continental aviation priorities. It does not create new statutory obligations or assessments for Member States.

## SESSION 1A

### **Air Transport as a Driver of Integration and Transformation (*High-Level Opening Roundtable*)**

The roundtable aligned the priorities of the AUC, AfCFTA Secretariat, African Development Bank (AfDB), Afreximbank, the Government of Togo and AFCAC around aviation's role in Agenda 2063 and Africa's economic transformation.

#### **Discussion and outcome**

Participants affirmed that air transport connects markets, production centres, tourism destinations, investment opportunities and regional value chains. The AU Theme of the Year 2027 was recognised as a time-bound opportunity to elevate SAATM delivery and accountability.

The session linked connectivity reform to investment mobilisation, affordable travel and stronger institutional coordination, including the capacity and financial sustainability of AFCAC as SAATM Executing Agency.

#### **Priority actions**

- i. Establish a shared 2026-2027 delivery plan linking SAATM, AfCFTA, priority corridors and measurable national commitments;
- ii. Mobilise DFIs and private capital around a screened pipeline of bankable aviation projects; and
- iii. Strengthen AFCAC's technical, institutional and financial capacity to monitor and coordinate implementation.

## SESSION 1

### **Accelerating SAATM Implementation (*Unlocking market access, connectivity and continental integration*)**

The session examined the remaining gap between political commitment and operational liberalisation under the YD and SAATM.

#### **Discussion and outcome**

Participants noted progress in political commitment, routes, regulatory harmonisation, competition rules, consumer protection, and aviation data, while identifying persistent protectionism, restrictive bilateral arrangements, infrastructure constraints, and the slow domestication of SAATM instruments.

Ministers and industry agreed that predictable market access, timely authorisations, and commercially sustainable route development are essential to connect SAATM with AfCFTA, tourism and investment.

The Convention also provided a practical platform for the negotiation and signature of bilateral air services agreements, reinforcing reciprocity, administrative predictability and the operational expansion of intra-African air connectivity under SAATM.

#### **Priority actions**

- i. Adopt national SAATM implementation roadmaps with timelines, responsible authorities and measurable indicators;
- ii. Align bilateral and multilateral air services agreements with the YD and SAATM, including wider Fifth Freedom opportunities and removal of unnecessary restrictions on routes, capacity, frequency and designation;
- iii. Support new intra-African routes through corridor packages, airline partnerships, infrastructure readiness and transparent regulatory processes;

- iv. Use Convention-facilitated bilateral air services agreements and side-letter arrangements to accelerate practical route development and the exercise of traffic rights; and
- v. Intensify accession and implementation support for remaining States and reinforce AFCAC-led audits and monitoring.

## SESSION 2

### **Reducing the Cost of Air Transport in Africa (*Affordability, transparency and fair competition*)**

The session addressed the taxes, fees, charges, regulatory fragmentation and service inefficiencies that suppress demand and weaken the competitiveness of African aviation.

#### **Discussion and outcome**

Participants supported the Continental TFC Policy Framework as the principal reference for coordinated reform. The discussion emphasised that aviation should be treated as growth-enabling infrastructure and that short-term fiscal extraction can erode traffic, investment and the wider tax base.

Transparency, cost-related charging, whole-of-government coordination and data-driven reform were identified as the foundations of a credible affordability programme.

#### **Priority actions**

- i. Endorse and operationalise the Continental TFC Policy Framework through national and REC-level reform roadmaps;
- ii. Remove obsolete, duplicative, excessive and non-cost-related charges while safeguarding service quality and infrastructure sustainability;
- iii. Standardise disclosure of ticket taxes and sector charges and establish an online benchmarking and reporting mechanism; and
- iv. Institutionalise coordination among finance, transport, trade, tourism, Civil Aviation Authorities (CAAs) and industry, supported by economic-impact analysis.

## SESSION 3

### **Air Cargo and Corridor-Based Route Development (*Linking connectivity to AfCFTA value chains*)**

The session positioned air cargo as a platform for industrialisation, food security, pharmaceuticals, e-commerce and higher-value African trade.

#### **Discussion and outcome**

Participants identified restrictive traffic rights, weak cargo and cold-chain infrastructure, fragmented logistics, cumbersome customs procedures, high costs, blocked funds and limited market intelligence as key constraints.

The session called for cargo corridors connecting production centers, industrial hubs, logistics platforms, and markets, combining liberalised access with commercially viable trade flows and modern border processes.

#### **Priority actions**

- i. Expand cargo market access and Fifth Freedom rights and align priority corridors with AfCFTA value chains;
- ii. Invest in cargo terminals, cold chains, logistics hubs, multimodal links, handling systems and tracking technologies;

- iii. Digitise and harmonise customs and border procedures, including electronic documentation and international standards;
- iv. Operationalise the AU Air Cargo Strategy and African Air Cargo Dashboard and explore fit-for-purpose financing for cargo development; and
- v. Promote value-added exports through partnerships among producers, airlines, airports, freight operators and governments.

#### SESSION 4

### **Seamless Mobility and Air Transport Facilitation (*Visa openness, Annex 9, API/PNR and digital travel*)**

The session examined how visa barriers, fragmented border practices, and uneven implementation of ICAO Annex 9 continue to raise costs and suppress intra-African travel. Seamless mobility and air transport facilitation remain the most complex and restrictive in Africa, where strict visa requirements between African states, inconsistent border management practices, and uneven application of ICAO Annex 9 facilitation standards continue to increase travel costs, reduce demand, and undermine the commercial viability of intra-African travel.

#### **Discussion and outcome**

Participants affirmed that mobility reform is indispensable to SAATM, AfCFTA, tourism and investment. Visa-free access, visa-on-arrival, interoperable e-visas, and the African Passport were recognised as mutually reinforcing pathways.

The discussion also highlighted the need for national facilitation programmes, API/PNR legal and technical readiness, integrated border management, digital travel credentials, data protection and stronger coordination among aviation, immigration, customs, health and security authorities.

#### **Priority actions**

- i. Integrate facilitation targets into national SAATM strategies and align them with AfCFTA trade-facilitation measures;
- ii. Expand visa-free and visa-on-arrival access, simplify documentation and processing, and advance interoperable e-visa and mutual-recognition arrangements;
- iii. Conduct Annex 9 and API/PNR readiness assessments and implement national roadmaps with measurable targets;
- iv. Modernise airports and border systems through interoperable digital processing, cybersecurity and risk-based passenger clearance; and
- v. Establish a continental mobility and facilitation scorecard with peer review and regular reporting.

#### SESSION 5

### **Aviation Infrastructure and Investment Partnerships (*From infrastructure gaps to bankable projects*)**

The session considered how the 2024 Aviation Infrastructure Gap Analysis, continental project pipelines, Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) and the Luanda Financing Summit can be converted into investable aviation projects.

#### **Discussion and outcome**

Participants stressed regional prioritisation, pooled demand, shared infrastructure and phased development based on realistic traffic forecasts. Projects should incorporate credible feasibility work,

environmental and social safeguards, climate resilience, governance and clear ownership from inception.

Early engagement among States, airports, ANSPs, airlines, regulators, DFIs, and investors was considered essential to align operational needs with financing requirements and enhance project bankability.

A dedicated private sector session, organised in collaboration with Afreximbank, provided an important platform for structured engagement on aviation investment, financing opportunities and partnerships across the aviation value chain.

### **Priority actions**

- i. Encourage Member States to utilise the technical support mechanisms provided by AFCAC, AUDA-NEPAD, DFIs, and development partners to strengthen institutional capacity, especially in project preparation, feasibility studies, transaction advisory services, and PPP structuring;
- ii. Align national projects with continental and corridor-level investment priorities and avoid uneconomic duplication;
- iii. Apply standardised project-preparation and bankability criteria, including robust feasibility and impact assessments;
- iv. Use Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), blended finance, pooled procurement and regional implementation models, supported by technical assistance;
- v. Build on the Afreximbank private sector dialogue to structure bankable financing partnerships for airlines, airports, cargo, MRO, technology, training and related aviation services;
- vi. Develop contract-management and project-governance capacity and clarify institutional responsibilities; and
- vii. Establish a technical and financial working group to assess financing options for GNSS/SBAS fleet retrofit readiness toward 2030 and beyond.

## **SESSION 6**

### **Sustainable Air Transport and Climate Resilience (*Advancing African SAF, LCAF and cleaner aviation energy*)**

The session translated the African Union SAF/LCAF Strategy 2025-2050 into policy, project, market and financing priorities, culminating in the Lomé SAF/LCAF Action Sheet.

### **Discussion and outcome**

Policy certainty, harmonised sustainability and certification frameworks, commercially viable feedstock chains and reliable infrastructure were identified as prerequisites for investment.

Participants emphasised that bankable projects require aggregated airline demand, long-term offtake signals, project preparation, blended finance, technology transfer and coordination across aviation, energy, agriculture, environment and finance.

### **Priority actions**

- i. Develop harmonised national and regional SAF/LCAF policy, certification and sustainability frameworks;
- ii. Prepare bankable projects covering feedstock production, aggregation, refining, storage, distribution and airport supply;
- iii. Mobilise technical assistance, project-preparation support and blended finance from DFIs and private investors;

- iv. Aggregate near-term demand and develop credible long-term offtake arrangements with African airlines; and
- v. Strengthen AUC-AFCAC coordination and State sensitisation on continental sustainable aviation strategies.

## SESSION 7

### **Innovation and Technology for Africa's Air Transport Future (*Digital transformation, safety, security and future capability*)**

The session considered how digitalisation, automation, artificial intelligence, data and advanced aviation technologies can improve safety, efficiency, connectivity and competitiveness.

#### **Discussion and outcome**

Participants called for enabling innovation ecosystems that bring together regulators, industry, academia, investors and technology providers. Priority capabilities included cybersecurity, digital aeronautical information management, SWIM, satellite CNS, and ADS-B.

Regulatory modernisation, performance-based approaches and workforce transformation were identified as necessary to adopt technology without compromising safety, security or environmental protection.

#### **Priority actions**

- i. Establish national and regional aviation innovation ecosystems and practical mechanisms for testing and deployment;
- ii. Prioritise cybersecurity, interoperable digital infrastructure, data governance, System-wide Information Management (SWIM) implementation, satellite Communication, Navigation Surveillance (CNS) and Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) readiness;
- iii. Review legal and regulatory frameworks through inclusive consultation, including academia, and promote performance-based regulation;
- iv. Review and update national legal frameworks and aviation regulations to eliminate unnecessary barriers to innovation while ensuring safety, security, and environmental standards are maintained; and
- v. Expand coordinated regional training and invest in the competencies required to regulate, operate and maintain technology-driven systems.

## SESSION 8

### **Women, Youth, and Skills Development in Aviation (*Building an inclusive, mobile and future-ready workforce*)**

The session centred on the workforce, inclusion, and the talent pipeline necessary to support Africa's aviation growth, recognising African Women and Youth in Aviation (AWAYA) as a continent-wide platform for mentorship, leadership, and career development.

#### **Discussion and outcome**

Participants adopted an Africa Aviation Skills and Inclusion Acceleration Package and called for modern curricula covering digital technologies, sustainability, data analytics and emerging aviation systems.

The session linked SAATM liberalisation to larger labour markets, economies of scale in training, and expanded opportunities for women and youth.

## Priority actions

- Set measurable targets for women's participation in leadership and mainstream gender and youth objectives in aviation policies and programmes.
- Recognise and enhance AWAYA as a practical continental platform for promoting inclusion and professional growth;
- Invest in scholarships, internships, mentorship, technical training and family-friendly workplace policies; and
- Track progress through gender- and age-disaggregated data and strengthen AWAYA as an implementation platform.

## 5. Continental Implementation Agenda

The Lomé Declaration and Implementation Matrix should act as the main accountability framework for the Convention's follow-up. The following delivery structure brings together the recurring actions from all sessions.

| Workstream                      | Lead                                                                                                      | Core Deliverable                                                                                                                                | Timing           |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>National delivery</b>        | Member States                                                                                             | SAATM, TFC, facilitation and seamless mobility, infrastructure, skills and sustainability roadmaps with responsible authorities and milestones. | 2026-2027        |
| <b>Regional execution</b>       | RECs and States                                                                                           | Priority corridors, harmonized rules, mutual recognition, pooled projects and peer-review mechanisms.                                           | From Q3 2026     |
| <b>Continental coordination</b> | AUC and AFCAC                                                                                             | Implementation monitoring, scorecards, technical support, advocacy and reporting to relevant AU policy organs.                                  | Biannual         |
| <b>Trade alignment</b>          | AfCFTA Secretariat, AUC, AFCAC                                                                            | Cargo corridors and business-mobility measures aligned with AfCFTA value chains and protocols.                                                  | 2026-2027        |
| <b>Investment platform</b>      | AUDA-NEPAD, DFIs (AfDB, Afreximbank, World Bank), Financial and Technical partners (EU/EASA) and industry | Screened project pipeline, preparation support, PPP/blended-finance structures and investor engagement.                                         | Pipeline by 2027 |
| <b>Global positioning</b>       | AUC, AFCAC and Member States                                                                              | Coordinated African positions and advocacy at ICAO ATConf/7.                                                                                    | November 2026    |
| <b>Political accountability</b> | AU policy organs and SAATM Champion                                                                       | Use the AU Theme of the Year 2027 to review delivery, resolve barriers and announce measurable results.                                         | Throughout 2027  |
| <b>Resource mobilisation</b>    | AFCAC, Member States, partners and industry                                                               | AFCAC Solidarity Commitment 2026-2028 mobilizing financial contributions, technical assistance and in-kind support for AFCAC mandates delivery. | 2026-2028        |

## 6. Link to ATConf/7 and the AU Theme of the Year 2027

The Convention endorsed a unified African platform for the Seventh ICAO Air Transport Conference in Montréal in November 2026. The platform positions SAATM at the centre of development-led liberalisation and affordability; advocates for blended finance and bankable infrastructure pipelines; supports stronger regulatory institutions and compliance with the Cape Town Convention; promotes interoperable digital systems, workforce skills, fair competition, consumer protection, facilitation, and data-driven accountability; and aims for global outcomes that address Africa's connectivity and development needs.

The AU Theme of the Year 2027 sets the political framework to sustain momentum beyond Lomé. It should be used to secure national commitments, publish implementation results, initiate priority routes and projects, recognise reform leaders, and address, at the highest level, ongoing barriers to market access, costs, facilitation, and financing.

## 7. Conclusion

The African Air Transport Convention & Expo 2026 established a clear continental consensus: Africa's air transport challenge is no longer the absence of policy, but the pace and discipline of implementation. The Lomé Declaration translates that consensus into a practical agenda covering market access, affordability, mobility, cargo, infrastructure, sustainability, technology, and skills. Its success must be measured by results visible to citizens and businesses: more direct routes, lower travel costs, simpler borders, faster cargo movement, stronger airlines, investable projects, and safer, greener, and more inclusive aviation.

Implementation now rests with Member States, supported by RECs, AUC, AFCAC, the AfCFTA Secretariat, AUDA-NEPAD, financial institutions, industry, and technical partners. The immediate priority is to turn the Declaration and Implementation Matrix into costed national and regional roadmaps, supported by financing, public reporting, and high-level oversight. With ATConf/7 in November 2026 and the AU Theme of the Year 2027 approaching, Africa has a limited yet valuable window to show that a single African sky is not just an aspiration, but an actual infrastructure being delivered for integration, competitiveness, and shared prosperity.

### Attachments:

Lomé Declaration

Implementation Matrix