AIR TRANSPORT, A VITAL CHALLENGE FOR AFRICA

COMPLEX JOURNEYS, LIMITED CONNECTIONS AND COVERAGE – AFRICAN AIR TRANSPORT FACES MANY CHALLENGES. HOW CAN ITS DEVELOPMENT BE NURTURED?

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Africa needs a strong, efficient, competitive air transport sector. It is a catalyst for regional integration, an indispensable support for intra-African trade and tourism, but also a key component of the continent’s development strategy.

However, strong GDP growth, the continent’s fast-growing urbanisation and the expansion of the middle classes – who want to travel – are likely to shake up this situation. The African aviation market is about to experience unprecedented growth. The IATA is forecasting an average annual increase of 5.7% in air traffic until 2034. The sector also offers major investment opportunities – estimated at over $160 billion for the acquisition of new aircraft alone.

Nevertheless, a few operators – including Ethiopian Airlines and Kenya Airways – have succeeded in overcoming these challenges. Far-reaching reforms are needed at regional and continental level to promote new successes and stimulate the development of private initiative. Only effective liberalisation of air transport will lead over time to increased traffic, improved safety and lower fares. Initiatives to this effect have already demonstrated their benefits, whether in South Africa or Kenya, Côte d’Ivoire or Zambia. The political determination of African heads of government will be key to implementing the Yamoussoukro Decision in full.

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