



## Concept Note

### Introduction

West Africa has a population of over 380 million people within fifteen (15) countries, with a total land mass of 5,112,903 Sq. km, which has many historical and cultural touristic sites. The region boasts of over forty (40) international airports, relatively well-resourced air navigation service providers and good centers of aviation training.

There have been significant efforts at regional integration and approaches to the development of air transport including through ECOWAS, BAG, UEMOA, ASECNA, Roberts FIR, BAGASOO, BAGAIA, AAMAC, etc. as well as Africa-wide commitments such as African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) and Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM). ECOWAS has implemented protocols to facilitate free movement of people among member States since the 1970s and fourteen (14) of the States in the region have made solemn commitment to SAATM.

Notwithstanding the fact that the sub-region has a country with the largest economy in Africa, the travel and tourism industries are faced with several challenges including poor air connectivity, low passenger and cargo traffic, high aviation charges and taxes and low intra-regional tourism. There are no strong airlines, major airport hubs and maintenance bases in West Africa when compared to other regions of North, East and South Africa, which have better connectivity, stronger carriers, major airport hubs, and leading MRO centers.

Flights across West Africa are expensive and irregular with low service quality. The air transport operating environment is bedeviled by high airline operating costs, weak regulatory oversight, sub-optimal aviation safety and security records and restrictive bilateral air services regimes.

These to a large extent have affected the contribution of air transport in the region as an engine of economic growth and its failure to support and boost trade and tourism as well as create employment for the teeming population.

### **Impact of COVID-19**

The impact of Covid-19 Pandemic has further exacerbated the difficult position of the region when compared to other regions in the African continent. It would upend the recent modest progress in strengthening safety and security oversight systems, and the optimism expressed by States and industry on the expected positive impact of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), on air connectivity and traffic growth and overall sustained air transport development.

### **What to do?**

As Covid-19 threatens the very existence of the industry, it also presents an opportunity for reassessing the role and contribution of civil aviation to the sub-region’s economic growth, social progress and integration, as well as the overall sustainable development.

There is an urgent need to reimagine, revitalize and retool the aviation system in West Africa to meet present and future challenges.

The Nigerian Ministry of Aviation in collaboration with iPADIS would organize a two-day high-level brain-storming virtual meetings of Member States’ policy makers, air transport regulators, industry representatives, aviation professionals and other stakeholders in the sub-region. The meetings would be held as follows:

Day 1	
<b>14h00 to 17h00</b> Hours GMT <b>10h00 to 13h00</b> Hours Montreal time <b>15h00 to 18h15</b> Hours, Abuja, Nigeria time	<b>Meeting of Experts led by the Directors General of Civil Aviation</b>
Day 2	
<b>14h00 to 17h00</b> Hours GMT <b>10h00 to 13h00</b> Hours Montreal time <b>15h00 to 18h15</b> Hours, Abuja, Nigeria time	<b>Meeting of Policy Makers led by the Ministers responsible for Civil Aviation</b>

### **Expected Participants:**

- Ministers, DGs and CEOs from Aviation, Tourism, Public Health and Border Control Sectors from ECOWAS and member States;
- Heads of international and regional organizations- ICAO, UNWTO, WHO, IATA, ACI, AUC, AFCAC, AFRAA, BAG, ASECNA, etc. and

- Heads of civil society and media organizations.

### **Issues for discussion**

The challenges of the aviation industry in Africa generally and the peculiar challenges specific to West Africa prior to Covid-19 are known. These have been identified and several solutions have been proffered through various Declarations, Policies and Roadmaps adopted under the leadership of the AU and AFCAC as well as various policies and programmes of ICAO in line with the No Country Left Behind philosophy.

In this regard, many political commitments were made to address challenges in aviation safety, security, infrastructure development, training, air transport and tourism development, passenger connectivity and cargo development. However, these were not effectively implemented at the regional and national levels.

The meetings' discussions would:

- (i) Consider the pre-COVID challenges to air transport development in the sub-region.
- (ii) Identify challenges and risks that encumbered development and implementation of solutions at national levels.
- (iii) Identify current and future impacts of Covid-19 on air connectivity; and
- (iv) Identify strategies and sectoral synergies that are required for air transport growth.

### **Conclusion**

iPADIS will, in consultation with the host State, develop draft Agenda, source facilitators and presenters as well as develop practical solutions and strategies to effectively address the identified challenges based on the meeting's outcome.

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