



**HIGH LEVEL / MINISTERIAL MEETING ON ENHANCING  
AIR TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY AND GROWTH IN WEST AFRICA  
18 MARCH 2021**

**COMMUNIQUE**

## COMMUNIQUE

**We**, Ministers responsible for air transport from West African States, neighbouring Central African States as well as from the Diaspora held a High-Level Ministerial meeting on Enhancing Air Transport Connectivity and Growth in West Africa on 18 March 2021, at the kind invitation of the Federal Ministry of Aviation, Nigeria in cooperation with the International Partners for Aviation Development, Innovation and Sustainability (iPADIS).

We considered many issues affecting air transport and related sectors, the impact and recovery from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic crisis as well as strategies and synergies to establish air transport on a path of sustainable and resilient growth in our States and region. Arising from our deliberations, We:

1. Acknowledge the population of over 380 million people, a land mass of 5,112,903 Square kilometres and many historical and cultural touristic sites within the fifteen (15) ECOWAS member States, some of which are small island and landlocked States. Also acknowledge that an important part of the African Diaspora is originating from this region.
2. Recognise the importance of air transport as a tool for regional economic growth, social integration and overall sustainable development, in line with the African Union vision for African integration, including travel, tourism and trade.
3. Affirm our determination to take full advantage of the safe and rapid interconnectivity that air transport offers for intra regional and international travels for our citizens and businesses.
4. Acknowledge the longstanding pre-COVID 19 challenges and the slow pace of air transport development and connectivity in the region that should have been effectively addressed, which the COVID-19 crisis have further exacerbated.
5. Determine to take urgent steps to address those factors that militate against national and regional solutions to sustainable development and growth of air transport in the region including political, institutional, financial, technological, technical expertise, capacity building, manpower development, infrastructure development, proliferation of taxes, regulatory constraints, etc.
6. Note that COVID-19 underscored the impact of public and user's confidence on operational and financial viability of air transport and accordingly, recognise that continuous improvement in safety, security, efficiency, reliability, comfort, affordability, and competitiveness of air travel is critical to sustainable development and growth of air transport.
7. Recognise that the current COVID-19 crisis further underscores the importance of inter-sectoral collaboration and synergies between air transport and other sectors of the

economy such as tourism, trade, finance, public health, immigration and border control etc., and that opportunities and threats in those sectors have significant impact on the strength and growth of air transport and vice versa.

8. Undertake to support the expeditious recovery of the air transport, travel, tourism trade and related sectors with the aim to reimagine, revitalize and retool the aviation system in West Africa to meet present and future challenges.
9. Recognise the need for regional collaboration for immediate development and implementation of harmonised air travel related public health policies and protocols as well as joint action to ensure that the interest of the region, its citizens and operators are not unduly or discriminatorily impacted by air travel policies and protocols, implemented by foreign governments and international organisations in the wake of COVID-19.
10. Appreciate the importance of establishing short, medium, long term and risk-based national and regional strategic civil aviation plans with clear objectives, measurable targets, milestones, accountabilities and monitoring mechanisms to establish sustainable, innovative, socially responsible and resilient aviation systems as well as the need to integrate such civil aviation plans into national and regional economic development plans.
11. Commit to develop, review and implement national, regional and international civil aviation policies, regulatory frameworks, and strategic plans that promote the growth of air transport in a sustainable, innovative and socially responsible manner.
12. Welcome a more active involvement of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and stakeholders to ensure that international civil aviation policies, plans and programmes consider the interests of users of air transport services and overall benefits to the society.
13. Urge all operators including airlines, airports, air navigation service providers, training organizations, freight forwarders, ground handling and catering services companies, etc. to review and adapt their plans, business models and operations to address current challenges and future risks, and to implement innovative technologies and solutions to ensure long-term sustainability and resilience of air transport systems in the region.
14. Express appreciation to the Federal Ministry of Aviation of Nigeria, the ECOWAS Commission and iPADIS for organizing and facilitating this Event and urge their continuing support to the implementation of the outcomes by States and stakeholders.
15. Thank AUC, AFCAC, AfDB, ICAO, UNWTO, WHO, World Bank and other regional and international, industry and civil society organizations for their active participation in the event and urge their continuing support and assistance to air transport development in the West African region.

Finally, we appreciate the spirit of openness and cordiality that prevailed during our deliberations in the Meeting.

The list of States and international organisations that attended and participated in the meeting is attached to this Communiqué.

18 March 2021

**High Level / Ministerial Meeting on Enhancing Connectivity and Growth in West Africa**