

Experts call for urgent action to boost aviation safety

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Regional governments have been urged to expedite efforts to establish a satellite air navigation based system to boost aviation safety and efficiency on the continent. Experts say the states should increase support to the EGNOS-Africa joint project, a pan-African entity and part of the Africa-European Union (EU) long-term strategic partnership to enhance safety in air transport.



Adrian Pingstone via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

According to aviation experts, the project is expected to benefit regional airports by enabling safer landings, increased efficiency, reliable services for passengers and better access to remote regions with less well-equipped airports.

The experts are currently meeting in Rwanda to deliberate on how to expedite the project and make the continent's aviation more safe and competitive.

Ladislaus Matinda, the director for EGNOS in Africa, said there is a need for more political support for the EU based system to be able to extend it to the whole of Africa. "It has become a global initiative to move away from the ground based aviation to a more digitized satellite technology to enhance safety and efficiency of the airline business," Matinda said, adding that the three-year project is funded by the European Union and financed from the 10th EDF Intra ACP envelope worth 3.7 million Euros.

Satellite-based augmentation services

Building a satellite-based augmentation service in Eastern Africa will enhance navigation safety, efficiency, airspace capacity and environmental sustainability, he added.

The project seeks to bring more than twelve States under the East Africa module including Rwanda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi as well as the Democratic Republic of Congo into the system.

The objective is to create more awareness among member states to support and adopt internal decisions to participate in the creation of the satellite-based technology. This technology already exists in Nigeria but does not cover the whole of Africa, he said.

Dr. Alexis Nzahabwanimana, Rwanda's State Minister for Transport, said the implementation of the Africa and EU cooperation on satellite navigation has been going on since the adoption of the Second Action Plan (2011-2013) of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy by Heads of State and Governments of Africa and Europe in 2010.

Capacity and efficiency needs to be re-visited

"The AU Space Policy and Strategy also recognises, in a particular way, satellite navigation systems and their applications to a wide range of economic sectors, especially in the field of transport," Nzahabwanimana said, adding that it is evident the current capacity and efficiency of the air navigation system in Africa can be considered as one of the bottlenecks in the implementation of these policies and strategic decisions.

Africa's current air navigation system's capacity and efficiency need to be re-visited if Africa is to benefit from the agreed establishment of a single African air transport market, he advised.

Aviation growth outlook for the next five years

Africa's aviation is expected to post positive growth in the next five years with passenger numbers projected to increase by 4.8 percent.

The number of freights will also grow by 3.5 percent in the next five years according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) statistics.

Equally, the number of airline passengers in Africa is expected to increase by 4.2 percent and the number of freights by 4.4 per cent.

The growth in the number of freights will be far better than that of Europe, which will grow by 3 percent, while passengers will inch up 2.6 percent. The highest growth in passenger numbers will be in the Asia-Pacific region at 6.3 percent, and 3.8 percent increase in the number of freights.