AVIATION REFORMS TO BOOST TRADE

By Aloysious Kasoma

Uganda's aviation and counterparts' ongoing aviation reforms are expected to strengthen continental connectivity, boost intra-African trade and position the country to benefit from Africa's growing liberalised air transport market.

This was revealed by Fred Bamwesigye, the director general of the Uganda Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), during the Capacity Building Workshop on Drafting, Revising and Implementing Competition Regulations in Air Transport Services in Africa held at Speke Resort Munyonyo last Friday.

The workshop ran from Wednesday, May 6, to Friday, May 8, 2026.



Participants from different countries attending a three-day aviation capacity building workshop last Friday at Speke Resort Munyonyo

NOTABLE REFORMS

During the Capacity Building Workshop held at Speke Resort Munyonyo last Friday, the director general of the Uganda Civil Aviation Authority, Fred Bamwesigye, revealed that Uganda has introduced reforms aimed at creating a fair and competitive aviation market. These include the enactment of the Competition Act 2024, the establishment of a Consumer Protection Unit within UCAA and the drafting of Civil Aviation Competition and Consumer Protection Regulations aligned with continental frameworks.

EFFICIENT MOVEMENT

Bamwesigye said Africa's push toward liberalising air transport through the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) and the Yamoussoukro Decision will create faster, cheaper and more efficient movement of people and goods across the continent. He added that aviation remains a critical driver of trade, tourism, investment and regional integration under continental initiatives, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area. He also noted that improved air connectivity will reduce dependence on non-African transit routes and open up new economic opportunities for investors and travellers.

Bamwesigye further highlighted the challenge of passengers and traders forced to transit through Europe before reaching destinations within Africa. "There are countries on the continent that you can only access through Europe. For example, you may have to go through Portugal before reaching Cape Verde. Liberalisation will allow direct connectivity between African countries, making trade and movement easier," Bamwesigye explained.

ACCESS TO AFRICAN MARKETS

He noted that the reforms under SAATM are expected to increase airline competition, lower airfares and improve access to African markets.

Uganda, he said, has already started implementing several liberalisation measures even before formally joining SAATM. These include granting fifth freedom traffic rights to airlines such as Rwanda Air and Kenya Airways, allowing them to transport passengers between destinations beyond Uganda.

The workshop was organised by the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) in partnership with McGill University and supported under an African Union project aimed at strengthening the implementation of competition regulations in Africa's liberalised aviation market.

ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Speaking at the same event, Octavia Oliveira said the implementation of SAATM is steadily improving connectivity, trade, tourism, and investment across the continent despite existing challenges.

Oliveira said SAATM, launched in 2018 by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, was established to liberalise Africa's air transport market and improve interconnectivity among member states.

"The idea behind SAATM and the Yamoussoukro Decision is to liberalise the African air transport market so that Africa can become more connected and economically integrated," Oliveira said.

She revealed that 38 African Union member states have so far joined SAATM, representing nearly 80% of intra-African air traffic.

"Since the launch of SAATM, more than 124 new air routes have been created across the continent, while traffic freedom penetration has increased from 14.5% to 23%," she said.

Oliveira, however acknowledged that visa restrictions, protectionist policies and infrastructure gaps continue to slow implementation in some member states.

FOREX RATES

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
US DOLLAR	3,754	3,775
EURO	4,365	4,500
POUND	5,065	5,200
KENYA SH	28.5	30
TANZ SH	1.3	1.57
DHIRAM	980	1,100
S.A RAND	225	290
JAPANESE YEN	18	40
RWANDES FRANC	2	4
DOLLAR SMALL	3,500	3,775

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