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## Press release

For immediate release

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### **Visa openness solutions can boost Africa's economic recovery, the 2020 Africa Visa Openness Index reveals**

- A record 54% of the continent is accessible for African visitors who no longer need a visa to travel or can get one on arrival
- In 2020, The Gambia joins Seychelles and Benin in allowing visa-free access for all African travelers.
- 24 countries offer e-Visas reflecting 44% of the continent.

**Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, 10 December 2020** - The upward trend in African countries liberalizing their visa regimes and welcoming African travelers continues, according to the *2020 Africa Visa Openness Index* published by the African Union Commission and African Development Bank on Thursday.

**This fifth edition of the Index highlights the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which threatens to reverse Africa's economic gains of recent years,** affecting sectors from tourism through to investment. As travel restrictions ease and safety measures are put in place to contain the pandemic, sustaining progress and momentum on more comfortable continent-wide travel is vital.

The 2020 Index shows that a record 54% of the continent is accessible for African visitors, who no longer need visas to travel or can get one on arrival, up by 9% since 2016. In 2020, The Gambia joins Seychelles and Benin in allowing visa-free access for all African travelers. In addition, 20 countries moved upwards in rank on the Index, while 50 countries improved or maintained their scores. The report shows a significant rise in e-Visas, offered by 24 countries in Africa.

Notwithstanding the gains made, findings show that African citizens still need visas to travel to 46% of African countries. Countries in East and West Africa rank highest among the top performers, worthy of emulation by countries in the other regions.

The Index's findings reinforce the benefits of prioritizing visa openness solutions in large and small economies, with the biggest gains accruing to business, investment, innovation and tourism. Further facilitating the free movement of people, goods and services, becomes even more important with the start of trading under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on 1 January 2021.

African Development Bank Vice-President, Regional Development, Integration and Business Delivery, Dr. Khaled F. Sherif said, "as the evolving fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, countries increasingly need to look beyond domestic frontiers to boost their economic prospects. Visa openness will support Africa to reposition its future growth."



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As close to half of African destinations ease travel restrictions in line with plans to manage the pandemic, travel safety and security remain foremost in policymakers' and people's minds as it concerns opening up of borders, and as governments update measures for permitting travel.

“As the time has come to safely reopen and revive economies across Africa, it is imperative to institute measures that propel the continent and all its citizens forward. Liberalizing a country's visa regime is a policy tool that can be quickly adopted to do this,” said Amb. Kwesi Quartey, Deputy Chairperson, African Union Commission.

### **About the Africa Visa Openness Index**

The *Africa Visa Openness Index* measures the extent to which African countries are open to travelers from other African countries when it comes to visas by looking at what they ask of the citizens when they travel into their countries. The Index is tracking changes in country scores over time to show which countries are making improvements that support people's freer movement across Africa.

Download the *2020 Africa Visa Openness Index* and find out more at [www.visaopenness.org](http://www.visaopenness.org)

### **Media contacts:**

**African Development Bank:** Amba Mpoke-Bigg, Communication and External Relations Department, email: [a.mpoke-bigg@afdb.org](mailto:a.mpoke-bigg@afdb.org)

**African Union Commission:** Klenam Normanyo, email: [normanyok@africa-union.org](mailto:normanyok@africa-union.org)