

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### **H.E. Lerato D. Mataboge Addresses the 42<sup>nd</sup> ICAO Assembly, Calls for Support to African ICAO Council Candidates**



The African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, H.E. Lerato D. Mataboge, addressed the 42<sup>nd</sup> Session of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Assembly, urging Member States and partners to support Africa's eight candidates for election to the ICAO Council to ensure that the continent's aviation priorities are reflected in global decision-making.

In her intervention, Commissioner Mataboge also outlined Africa's strategic focus areas, placing the implementation of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) at the top. She stressed that SAATM remains central to repositioning Africa's aviation sector for greater connectivity, competitiveness, and socio-economic integration under Agenda 2063.

## **Renewed Momentum for SAATM**

Since its launch in 2018, 38 Member States, representing more than over 90% of the intra-African air transport market have joined SAATM. The adoption of the SAATM Dispute Settlement Mechanism in 2023 marked the completion of a comprehensive regulatory framework, paving the way for full implementation.

Liberalisation is already yielding results, with more than 108 new routes including 19 Fifth Freedom routes have been created, reducing reliance on non-African hubs. Fifth Freedom traffic has grown from 14.5% in 2018 to 23% in 2024, with record growth rates of 26% in 2022 and 36% in 2023. These developments are lowering travel costs by up to 26% and expanding opportunities for trade and tourism

Commissioner Mataboge emphasized that Africa is transitioning from frameworks to action addressing high taxes and charges, strengthening airline business models, and closing infrastructure gaps.

## **Coordinated African Representation**

Turning to ICAO governance, Commissioner Mataboge introduced Africa's eight candidates for election to the ICAO Council: Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Mali, Morocco, and Uganda. *"Africa's candidacies go beyond geographic representation. They bring the expertise, leadership, and vision required to ensure that our priorities — from safety and security to facilitation and environmental sustainability, are addressed at ICAO's highest level,"* she said.

This collective effort reflects Africa's determination to strengthen its voice in ICAO's Governing Body and ensure that global aviation decisions account for the continent's realities and ambitions.

## **Strong Partnerships for Sustainable Aviation**

Through partnerships with the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the African Airlines Association (AFRAA), the World Bank (through its Biashara Project) the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Export–Import Bank (Afrexim Bank), the European Union (EU), the African Union is prioritising investment in a pipeline of bankable aviation infrastructure projects, expanding intra-African connectivity, and working to raise Africa's modest 2.9 percent share of global air traffic.

On the sidelines of the Assembly, Commissioner Mataboge held bilateral meetings with key partners and stakeholders, reinforcing Africa's commitment to deepen collaboration across aviation, digital, energy, and trade. She underlined that cross-sectoral approaches are critical for unleashing intra-regional market potential, enhancing carrier competitiveness, and advancing integration under SAATM and AfCFTA.

As the global aviation community seeks to navigate post-COVID recovery amidst new regional challenges, Africa is positioning itself as a strategic partner and growth frontier. Commissioner Mataboge concluded with a call to action. *“Africa is steadfast, united for greater representation, committed to stronger partnerships, and determined to shape the future of aviation for the benefit of our continent and the world.”*

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