

Aviation industry has 'sky high' potential to create new jobs

By [Alexandre de Juniac](#)

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Aviation is a key part of the economic lifeblood of Africa. It supports 6.9 million jobs and \$80bn in GDP. It carries people and goods across and outside the continent and brings in economic investment, tourism, trade, and aid.



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Aviation in Africa is promising. Over the next two decades, African aviation is forecast to grow at 5.4% a year, nearly tripling in size. The continent's top 10 fastest growing markets are growing at an even faster 8% per year.

Even though many are rising from a small base, it points to a very bright future for aviation in Africa. Currently, 76.6 million people use air transport as inbound or bound passengers or those that travel within Africa.

Cannot take growth for granted

If projections by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) are correct, that figure will grow to 300 million by 2035. But many promises of progress in African aviation sector have not been realised. However, we cannot take this growth for granted, or the economic and social benefits it will bring.

What are the risks to growth? The biggest policy question mark is the Yamoussoukro Decision which aims to liberalise intra-Africa travel. Africa will not realise its potential unless the deal is fully implemented. On top of that are requirements for investments in aircraft and airports, as well as air navigation services.



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There is the question of ensuring a future workforce with the right skills to run airlines in a competitive environment, to fly and maintain the aircraft, to manage the airport systems, provide air navigation services, among others.

According to Airbus, the world's airlines will require 25,000 new aircraft, in the next 20 years, in addition to the 17,000 existing global fleet.

Globally, we expect to see a requirement for half a million new technicians and engineers to maintain and look after these aircraft and over 350,000 pilots to fly them. About 1,000 of these new aircraft will be destined for Africa.

The ability of African aviation to reach its full potential will hinge upon the creation of a professional, skilled, and sustainable workforce.

A more collaborative and concerted effort is required

There are good private-sector initiatives underway and IATA is committed to continuous training through the IATA Airline Training Fund in Africa. Already this year 2,484 young African aviation professionals have benefitted from this. However, to achieve the scale and sustainability required to meeting the skills need for future growth, a more collaborative and concerted effort is required.



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While the industry is best suited to addressing the current specialist knowledge and skills gaps, we are dependent on African governments to put in place the right environment to create the future talent that the sector needs.

Today's economies are increasingly knowledge-based and technology-driven. New technologies are spawning new ways of working and, as such, we cannot easily predict what future jobs will entail.

We have to prepare the next generation

What we *do* know is we have to prepare the next generation with the capacity for lifelong learning so they are able to adapt to what will be a rapidly evolving economy. This means we need education systems to produce significantly greater numbers of young people with both the technical and IT skills the industry needs as well as the life skills necessary to be employable.

“ If Africa can meet the future demand for highly skilled aviation roles, it will benefit from increased GDP growth, investment in future job-creation, and ultimately, enjoy its slice of the prosperity that aviation can generate. ”

Thinking big, there is even potential for Africa to become a global aviation training centre, meeting its market needs and

exporting skilled labour to other parts of the world that are growing.

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