



UN Tourism/ICAO Ministerial Summit calls for enhanced cooperation to unlock Africa's growth

Luanda, Angola - The second UN Tourism and ICAO Ministerial Conference on Tourism and Air Transport in Africa concluded with a unified call to enhance partnerships and collaboration to unlock the region's growth.

Jointly organized by UN Tourism, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and the Government of Angola, the high-level event drew more than 300 international delegates around the theme "Accelerating Synergies for Resilient and Sustainable Growth". The three-day conference, focused on strengthening the alignment between two of Africa's fastest-growing sectors: tourism and air transport. Both are critical enablers for job creation, innovation, and greater regional mobility.

In his opening remarks, UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: "Tourism and air transport are not just engines of growth, they are pathways to empowerment, opportunity, and transformation, through strategic leadership and innovation, Africa's potential can become its reality." He urged decisive policy action to remove the barriers holding African tourism back. H.E Daniel Marcio, Angola's Minister of Tourism said "Angola is proud to host such a landmark event, which positions Angola as a regional hub for dialogue and action,. Tourism is a key pillar of our national strategy for inclusive development, job creation, and cultural promotion."

In his intervention, H.E Mr. Ricardo de Abreu, Angola's Minister of Transport, emphasized the importance of infrastructure and regulatory reform: "We must build air transport systems that are not only modern and efficient but also accessible and responsive to the needs of our people. Connectivity within Africa is essential to realizing the continent's economic potential."

ICAO Council President Salvatore Sciacchitano commended the initiative's collaborative spirit: "Tourism and aviation must grow hand in hand. Through shared vision and policy coherence, we can drive sustainable development, enhance safety and security, and ensure no country is left behind."

Connectivity, Policy Reform, Investment

The Luanda Conference placed a strong emphasis on advancing Africa's tourism and air transport sectors through enhanced connectivity, regulatory reform, and cross-sector collaboration. Delegates agreed that aligning aviation and tourism policies is vital to unlocking

the continent's potential, particularly through open skies agreements, cohesive infrastructure planning, and public-private investment. A central focus was also placed on simplifying visa processes, promoting joint destination marketing, and removing travel barriers to stimulate intra-African tourism.

The Conference began with an expert-led workshop featuring technical sessions on innovation, connectivity, investment, and regional integration. Participants explored how technologies like AI and digital platforms can improve service delivery, while also identifying new funding models to expand infrastructure. In-depth discussions addressed how frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) can support harmonized policies and boost regional mobility.

Ministerial Discussions and Commitments

Over two days of ministerial sessions, high-level officials focused on aligning policy frameworks, driving innovation for inclusive growth, ensuring equitable access to travel, and building resilient transport and tourism systems. The Conference concluded with the formal adoption of the Luanda Ministerial Statement—an affirmation of Africa's collective commitment to developing a seamless, sustainable, and integrated travel ecosystem. While welcoming the delegates

Luanda Ministerial Statement.

Ministers, leaders of delegations and delegates present pledged to:

- Modernize tourism and aviation infrastructure with support from both public and private investment.
- Deepen partnerships with key institutions including ICAO, UN Tourism, IATA, AFRAA, AFCAC, and others.
- Advance mobility reforms through simplified and more affordable visa regimes, fast-track procedures, and longer-validity multi-entry visas.
- Promote intra-African tourism, including joint destination marketing and greater collaboration with the private sector.
- Empower youth and women through skills training, entrepreneurship support, and educational initiatives focused on the tourism and aviation sectors.

This 2nd conference came at a time of record momentum for African tourism. The continent welcomed 74 million international arrivals in 2024, a 7% increase over 2019 and 12% more than in 2023, signalling strong recovery and renewed global interest in African destinations.

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