

**UN Tourism – AFRAA Joint Virtual Workshop
on
Connectivity, Travel Facilitation and Tourism Growth in Africa**

**Theme: “Connecting Africa: Turning Air Connectivity and Travel Facilitation into
Tourism Growth”**

Wednesday, 28 October and Thursday, 29 October 2026

(11:00-13:00 CET/12:00-14:00 EAT)

Concept Note

1. Background and Context

Air connectivity and travel facilitation are fundamental enablers of tourism development. For Africa, however, the potential of intra-African tourism remains constrained by a combination of limited connectivity, high travel costs, taxes and charges, and barriers to the movement of people across borders.

The 69th meeting of the UN Tourism Commission for Africa (CAF) on 3 July 2026, highlighted these challenges and called for practical, cross-sectoral solutions. The Commission noted concerns regarding air connectivity and the high cost of intra-African travel and urged Member States to foster collaboration among tourism, transport, aviation, finance and home affairs authorities, including through regional visa-free and uni-visa models.

The 69th meeting of the UN Tourism Commission for Africa further urged Member States to move beyond discussion and accelerate the Luanda Ministerial Statement on Tourism and Air Transport in Africa endorsed at the 2nd UN Tourism/ICAO Ministerial Conference on Tourism and Air Transport in Africa (CAF/CR/5, para. 3). The CAF conclusions set out a clear mandate for joint tourism–aviation action.

Building upon this political mandate, this initiative also operationalizes the Lomé Ministerial Declaration and Implementation Matrix (June 2026) adopted at the AFCAC African Air Transport Convention. By linking Luanda’s policy vision with Lomé’s concrete targets on SAATM, tax rationalization, and border facilitation, the workshop connects continental tourism and civil aviation priorities into a unified action plan.

Member States were asked to:

- Review taxes and charges on air transport and coordinate ministries to make regional travel affordable (CAF/CR/6, para. 7);
- Strengthen air and multimodal links, including to secondary and emerging destinations, through appropriate financing and public–private partnerships (CAF/CR/6, para. 8);
- Simplify, digitalise and reduce the cost of visa and entry procedures, in line with the AfCFTA (CAF/CR/6, para. 9);

- Scale up regional facilitation models such as visa-free regimes and uni-visas across regional economic communities, bringing together ministries of tourism, transport, aviation, finance and home affairs (CAF/CR/3, para. 6);
- Set up a tourism–transport working group and task force to improve connectivity and mobility across the continent (CAF/CR/6, para. 12).

The Commission also stressed data-driven, evidence-based decision-making (CAF/CR/7) and welcomed the finalisation of a Memorandum of Understanding between UN Tourism and AFRAA (CAF/CR/5, para. 10). These priorities underscore the need to move beyond broad policy discussions towards **evidence-based diagnosis, practical solutions and measurable actions**. This workshop is a first practical deliverable under that partnership.

Against this background, the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) and UN Tourism will stage a joint technical workshop focusing on the relationship between **air connectivity, travel facilitation and tourism growth**, using the **East African Community (EAC)** as a sub-regional pilot.

The EAC provides a particularly relevant testing ground because of its existing regional integration frameworks and practical travel facilitation mechanisms, including the East Africa Tourist Visa. The workshop will use the EAC corridor to examine, with available evidence, how connectivity, capacity, travel costs and border/visa facilitation interact to influence intra-regional tourism.

The intention is not to limit the discussion to East Africa, but to use the EAC as a **practical case study from which an African framework and actionable recommendations can be developed and subsequently replicated in other regional economic communities**.

2. Rationale

Tourism, aviation and travel facilitation are closely interconnected. A destination may have strong tourism assets, but their economic potential cannot be fully realised if travellers face limited flight options, high fares, excessive taxes and charges, or cumbersome border and visa procedures.

The 69th CAF outcomes explicitly recognise the central role of connectivity in tourism growth and the importance of data-driven approaches to understand market trends and support evidence-based decision-making.

Furthermore, the workshop highlights successful collaborative Air Access / Air Connect destination models (such as those in Cape Town, Botswana, Namibia, and Zambia). These multi-stakeholder frameworks bring together governments, civil aviation authorities, tourism boards, airlines, and the private sector to jointly unlock air connectivity. They demonstrate that air access is not merely a tourism enabler, but a vital catalyst for trade, investment, commerce, and overall regional economic development.

The workshop therefore seeks to bring together the relevant stakeholders across the tourism, aviation, transport, border management and regional integration ecosystems to answer three practical questions:

1. **How connected is the region?**
What levels of direct air connectivity and capacity currently exist between key EAC markets and tourism destinations?
2. **How affordable and competitive is regional travel?**

What are the indicative airfares, aviation taxes, passenger service charges and other cost components affecting intra-regional travel?

3. **How seamless is the traveller journey?**

How effectively do existing visa, border and travel facilitation mechanisms support tourism and regional mobility?

The workshop will use these questions to identify practical interventions and establish a framework for monitoring progress.

3. Objectives

The workshop will seek to:

- Examine the relationship between air connectivity, travel facilitation and tourism growth in Africa.
- Establish an evidence baseline for selected EAC markets and corridors covering connectivity, capacity and travel costs.
- Examine the effectiveness of existing regional travel facilitation mechanisms, including visa and border arrangements.
- Identify the principal regulatory, operational, infrastructure and cost barriers affecting intra-regional tourism travel.
- Share perspectives and technical expertise from airlines, aviation institutions, tourism authorities, regional economic communities and international organisations.
- Identify practical measures to improve connectivity, affordability and travel facilitation.
- Explore how aviation and tourism stakeholders can work together to establish measurable connectivity and travel-facilitation indicators.
- Develop an initial set of recommendations and priority actions for the EAC pilot.
- Consider how the EAC experience and methodology can be replicated in other African sub-regions, **prioritizing a SADC corridor pilot**

4. EAC Evidence Baseline

A central feature of the workshop will be a short **EAC Connectivity and Travel Facilitation Evidence Baseline**, prepared through the AFRAA–UN Tourism collaboration. The baseline will, to the extent that reliable data are available, examine:

A. Connectivity and Capacity

- Current direct flight connectivity between selected EAC markets.
- Frequency of direct flights on key intra-EAC routes.
- Available seat capacity.
- Major airline operators serving selected corridors.
- Connectivity gaps, underserved markets and potential tourism corridors.
- Where possible, links between air connectivity and major tourism destinations.

B. Cost Dynamics

- Indicative airfares on selected intra-EAC routes.
- Aviation taxes and government-imposed charges.
- Passenger service charges and other airport-related charges.
- Other material cost components affecting the traveller.
- Comparison of selected intra-EAC routes where useful to illustrate affordability challenges.

C. Travel Facilitation

- Existing visa and entry arrangements.
- Implementation and practical accessibility of regional facilitation mechanisms.
- Digitalisation of visa and entry processes.
- Key traveller pain points and areas where processes could be simplified.
- Opportunities for greater alignment between tourism and aviation facilitation policies.

The evidence baseline is intended to **stimulate discussion rather than constitute a comprehensive statistical study**. Data sources, methodology and limitations will be clearly identified.

5. Workshop Approach

The workshop will follow a practical and interactive format combining:

- Short technical presentations to establish the evidence and policy context.
- Expert interventions from aviation, tourism and regional integration institutions.
- Moderated panel discussions.
- Q&A and participant interventions.
- A facilitated working session focused on the EAC pilot.
- Identification and prioritisation of practical actions.

The approach is aligned with the CAF recommendation for stronger coordination between connectivity and tourism stakeholders and the establishment of a dedicated multi-stakeholder working group or task force to develop and implement measures that enhance connectivity and facilitate mobility.

6. Technical Contributors

The workshop will seek contributions from:

- **AFRAA** – African airline connectivity, capacity, route development and cost perspective.
- **UN Tourism** – tourism trends, travel facilitation and tourism policy perspective.
- **East African Community Secretariat** – regional integration and travel facilitation.
- **EAC Member States / Tourism Authorities** – policy and destination perspective.
- **Airlines operating in the EAC** – market, route economics, capacity and operational perspective.
- **AFCAC** – continental aviation policy and SAATM implementation.
- **ICAO** – international aviation facilitation and standards.
- **IATA** – airline economics, distribution, passenger facilitation and industry perspective.
- **ACI** – airport connectivity, passenger experience, airport charges and infrastructure.
- **COMESA** – regional integration and movement of people perspective.
- **National Tourism Boards**
- Other relevant technical partners and stakeholders as appropriate.

7. Expected Outputs

The workshop is expected to produce:

1. An **EAC Connectivity and Travel Facilitation Evidence Baseline**.
2. A shared understanding of the principal barriers affecting intra-EAC tourism travel.
3. A prioritised list of interventions covering:
 - air connectivity and capacity;
 - airfares, taxes and charges;
 - visa and border facilitation;
 - digitalisation;

- regulatory and institutional coordination.
- 4. Proposed **connectivity and travel-facilitation metrics** that can be monitored over time.
- 5. An initial **EAC Action Framework** identifying priority actions, responsible stakeholders and potential next steps.
- 6. Recommendations on how the pilot methodology could be adapted and applied to other African regional economic communities, **starting with the SADC sub-region**.

8. Strategic Alignment

The workshop supports the priorities emerging from the 69th UN Tourism Commission for Africa, particularly the call to reduce travel costs, strengthen air and multimodal connectivity, simplify and digitalise visa and entry procedures, and enhance coordination between tourism and transport stakeholders.

It also responds to the Commission's recognition that air connectivity and hospitality development are central drivers of tourism growth and that data-driven approaches are important for understanding market trends and supporting evidence-based decision-making.

The workshop will further provide a practical platform for implementing the broader objective of stronger collaboration and partnerships between UN Tourism, AFRAA, regional economic communities, Member States and aviation stakeholders.

9. Target Participants

The workshop will be primarily technical and will target:

- Tourism ministries and authorities;
- Civil aviation authorities;
- Transport and infrastructure authorities;
- Immigration and border management authorities;
- EAC Secretariat and relevant regional institutions;
- Airlines;
- Airports;
- AFCAC, ICAO, IATA and other aviation organisations;
- Regional economic communities;
- Tourism private-sector stakeholders;
- Development and technical partners;
- Relevant UN Tourism Member States and Affiliate Members.

10. Format and Duration

The virtual workshop will be conducted over two sessions:

Session 1 – Wednesday, 28 October 2026

11:00-13:00 (CET/12:00-14:00 EAT)

Session 2 – Thursday, 29 October 2026

11:00-13:00 (CET/12:00-14:00 EAT)

The first session will establish the policy and evidence baseline and examine the connectivity and cost dimensions of the EAC pilot as a case study. The second session will focus on travel facilitation, stakeholder perspectives and translating the evidence into practical actions and an EAC/SADC pilot framework.

11. Way Forward

Following the workshop, AFRAA and UN Tourism may consider establishing a technical follow-up mechanism to refine the EAC /SADC pilots, validate the proposed indicators and monitor implementation of agreed actions.

Subject to the outcomes of the pilot, the methodology could subsequently be applied to other regional economic communities- **starting with the SADC sub-region-** creating a comparable evidence base for understanding and improving the relationship between **connectivity, travel facilitation and tourism growth across Africa.**