Book Review VII: The Air Transport Industry in Africa (Routledge, 2025): A Legal Analysis of the Single African Air Transport Market

By:

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May 29, 2026

The book *"The Air Transport Industry in Africa: A Legal Analysis of the Single African Air Transport Market"* is a detailed exploration of the nexus between law and aviation, which seeks to promote the aviation industry in Africa. The book is a timely intervention as Africa grapples with an overly regulated aviation market. Importantly, the book unpacks the goals of Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), which is an initiative which seeks to provide an impetus towards the deregulation of the air services and open regional markets. The author examines the complexities provided by the quest for a liberalised air transport market as espoused by SAATM. He observes the challenges provided by the transition from bilateral agreements to unifies market based. The book is a timely intervention as Africa braces for an accelerated intra-African trade, and the aviation industry is seen as a panacea for the full actualisation of the

African dream. Dr Kiema identifies and comprehensively analyses the Single African Air Transport Market within the prism of challenges and opportunities provided by the Single African Air Transport Market, and also provides tailor-made solutions that will enhance the full actualisation of SAATM through the provision of comprehensive policy considerations taking cognisance of the African aviation landscape.

The book is divided into 9 thematic chapters that seek to simplify and discuss the Single African Air Transport Market. The chapters are couched in a way that addresses the challenges and opportunities provided by the deregulation of the African aviation landscape. The first chapter sets the stage by dealing with the introduction to the African Aviation industry by analysing the development within the prisms of geography, economy and infrastructural development. The chapter also examines the deleterious effects of colonialism and the different developmental stages of aviation infrastructure across Africa. Dr Kiema observes that all these negative aspects regarding the aviation industry have stifled the aviation developmental potential of the industry. The chapter also investigates the domestic market by providing a critical analysis of both the domestic and regional aviation industry. The chapter provides investors with an array of potential investments in the industry; a goal couched within the auspices of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM).

In chapter one, the author unpacks the air transport industry in Africa by gleaning through the prism of economic, demographic and infrastructural strains. The chapter unpacks the legacies of colonialism, different developmental stages that have exacerbated operational efficiencies, which have impeded the growth of the aviation industry in Africa. The author continues to look at the domestic market, cargo and the Single African Air Transport Market, which is an African Union initiative to try and harmonise the African skies through the creation of a single market through enabling the freedom of the skies.

In addition, the subsequent chapters 3 and 4 of the book unpacks the significance of the aviation industry by exploring the historical development of the aviation industry in Africa. The chapter commences by looking at the colonial period, then looks into post-colonial phases. The author also looks at the proliferation of national airlines as symbols of national pride. Despite the

stagnant development of the aviation industry during the early phases of liberation, wherein the market was taken over by national airlines, the chapter makes a forward-looking step by looking at attempts to liberalise the aviation industry. This is done by observing the period from 2010 to the present. In addition, the book unpacks the aviation industry by providing an institutional framework governing the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) and Yamoussoukro Decision (YD), which are African Union initiatives aimed at liberalising the aviation industry increase competition and reducing fares. These two institutions are aimed at enhancing collaborations among African member states in building an inclusive deregulated industry, which will promote intra-African trade. The author gleans these two African union initiatives as bedrock from the liberalisation of the aviation industries and examines the organisational structures of these two initiatives that provide the necessary impetus in deregulating the sector. The authors look at the initiatives, both from opportunities and impediments faced by them in their quest for deregulation of the aviation industry in Africa. The author concludes by highlighting that collectively this institution contributes to the opening of the African skies.

In addition, chapter 5 and 6 of the book, the author looks at the operationalisation of the Yamoussoukro Decision (YD). The book looks at the role of a deregulated aviation industry in facilitating an integrated competitive aviation industry in Africa. The author also looks at the extent to which the role of Bilateral Air Services Agreements among African states has progressed. Public policy considerations have been examined as a key ingredient in implementing YD in enhancing aviation security, safety, competition and consumer protection among other factors. The author concludes chapter 5 of the book by observing how YD should be gleaned as a legal instrument within the African aviation sector, highlighting both challenges and opportunities and in realising the full opportunity in the deregulation of the aviation sector. Moreover, Chapter 6 looks at the extent of the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) in the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa. The author opens the chapter by providing a nexus between YD and RECs within the African context. The chapter categorises RECS into zones North Africa region entails the Arab Maghreb Union; the Western Africa comprises ECOWAS, WAEMU and BAG; the Central Africa Region comprises CEMAC and

ECCAS; and the Southern and Eastern Region comprises EAC, SADC and COMESA. The chapter looks at the complementarity and overlap of these RECS inquest for liberalisation of the aviation industry in Africa. Key metrics such as traffic exchange framework, frequency and capacity, as well as market penetration and access among airlines. The RECS and YD plays profound role in achieving the liberalisation of the aviation sector within the African continent. A deregulated aviation industry is essential to promote inter-African trade.

Chapter 7 opens up by providing a comprehensive analysis of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM). It weighs its potential benefits against the perceived significant obstacles to its implementation. The chapter posits that while SAATM holds the promise of transforming Africa's aviation landscape and driving broader socioeconomic growth. The success of SAATM is hinged on its ability to overcome deep-seated challenges. In addition, SAATM is earmarked to promote increased flight frequencies, greater connectivity, and lower airfares. The success of SAATM will stimulate inter-African trade, tourism, job creation and effective integration of African economies. The benefits position SAATM as a stimulus for continental development.

However, the chapter also critically assesses the barriers that have historically stifled liberalisation. Some of the key challenges that the chapter has identified include persistent regulatory inconsistencies among states, protectionist policies, and infrastructural deficiencies, such as inadequate airports and air navigation systems, among others. These operational challenges create a disintegrated market that prevents the realisation of the full potential of the aviation sector in Africa. The chapter concludes that the promise of SAATM is hinged on a collective commitment of all stakeholders. Overcoming these entrenched challenges requires strong political will to harmonise these regulations and eliminate protectionism, coupled with an increase in significant investment in infrastructure. The transformative vision of SAATM will only be actualised if these persistent structural issues, which have been addressed in the chapter, are addressed.

In chapter 8, the chapter opens by pointing out that the liberalisation of African air transport and the pursuit of a Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) is not a new phenomenon. The deregulation of the aviation sector is informed by the lived experiences of other regions. This chapter provides a detailed analysis

of two successful liberalisation initiatives, which are the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The author in chapter 8 provides a detailed chronological development of their policies and regulatory frameworks, which led to the successful deregulation of their aviation industries. The chapter distinguishes approaches and achievements of both the EU and ASEAN. In addition, the authors also briefly glance at the liberalisation endeavours of other regions by paying attention to their implementation models. The analysis reveals that while the EU followed a highly institutionalised, universal approach. The ASEAN adopted a more flexible, consensus-driven model. From these two models, the chapter identifies both opportunities and significant challenges for the actualisation of SAATM. The chapter concludes by asserting that the success of Africa's liberalisation of the aviation industry hinges on its ability to learn from these precedents. Conclusively, this chapter synthesises the book's core arguments on the liberalisation of air transport in Africa, which is centred on the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) and Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM). The chapter traces the evolution of the aviation sector. It outlines Africa, pertinent legal frameworks of the African Union (AU) and regional economic communities. Through comparative analyses with the European Union and ASEAN, the author highlights key lessons and the challenges of the African airline industry context, regarding sovereignty and infrastructure.

Chapter 9 provides key recommendations advocating for a principled and holistic approach in liberalisation of the aviation sector. It argues that SAATM must be integrated into broader AU initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCTA) to maximise impact. A holistic implementation of the YD requires addressing not just market access but also the auxiliary institutions for competition law, consumer protection, and dispute resolution. Finally, the chapter offers some policy recommendations on safety and security. It recommends strengthening the capacity of regional safety oversight agencies and harmonising security protocols. Regarding issues of financing, the author calls for innovative mechanisms to fund infrastructure and airline recapitalisation, including public-private partnerships that ensure the sustainable growth of the sector.

To conclude, "*The Air Transport Industry in Africa: A Legal Analysis of the Single African Air Transport Market”* is a timely contribution to the growing literature

that deals with contemporary aviation issues bedevilling Africa. The book is an essential read for students, policy makers, lawyers, politicians, academics and anyone with an interest in the aviation sector. The book depicts contemporary aviation issues in Africa and provides a compass on how Africa can successfully liberalise its airline sector. Thus, the book is a call for action and a necessary resource in understanding the aviation discourse in Africa and its implications for economic development.

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