

Africa needs heavy investment to face variety of challenges

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The private sector both in Africa and abroad has been urged to increase its investment in the continent's air transport industry if it is to solve its problems and achieve economic growth.

Tanzanian president Jakaya Kikwete made the call in the opening address of the 17th Aviation & Allied Business Leadership conference in Dar es Salaam.

Kikwete also said it would be necessary for African countries to dramatically improve co-operation and form regional groupings. "We need co-operation and solidarity amongst ourselves. It is an open secret that African countries cannot afford to work independently and succeed in the development of the aviation sector," he said.

In addition to the low level of investment from the private sector, Africa has a poor safety and security record and a lack of infrastructure, amongst other problems. Kikwete said further challenges facing the continent were a lack of professionals and poor management – problems which have been compounded by the fact that "Middle East airlines are increasingly taking [the aviation experts] to their countries, leaving us with nothing," according to Elijah Chingosho, secretary general of the African Airlines Association.

Kikwete believes that an improvement in the aviation industry in Africa would result in a huge increase in tourism. At the moment, for example, there is no direct connectivity between certain African destinations, nor between Africa and countries like Japan or China.

Looking at the challenges facing Africa as a whole, Kikwete recommended that addressing them should be seen as a step-by-step process. "These are matters that rest squarely in the hands of African leaders both political and business," he said. "First and foremost, we have to put in place a conducive environment with supportive policy and regulatory frameworks to promote increased investments in building successful airlines, good airports and acquisition of other air transport infrastructure and assets."

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