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**Keyamo's Favouritism Towards Private
Airlines Over National Carrier**








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MMA2 Takes Proactive Steps To Ensure Safe Holiday Travel



Acting COO, Bi-Courtney Aviation Services Limited, Remi Jibodu

Bi-Courtney Aviation Services Limited, the operator of Murtala Muhammed Airport Terminal 2 [MMA2], has taken proactive measures to ensure a seamless and secure travel experience for passengers during the peak holiday season.

At a recent critical year-end safety meeting, key stakeholders, including airport staff, airline representatives, and security personnel, came together to discuss safety best practices, emergency response procedures, and risk mitigation strategies.

Head, Corporate Communications, Bi-Courtney Aviation Services Limited, Ajoke Yinka-Olawuyi in a statement says, the focus was on maintaining the highest safety standards and preventing incidents that could compromise passenger safety.

According to Remi Jibodu, Acting COO, Bi-Courtney Aviation Services Limited, "Safety is our top priority. By conducting regular safety reviews and training sessions, we aim to create a culture of safety and vigilance among everyone operating from our terminal, passengers and terminal users. We are committed to providing a secure and hassle-free travel experience for all our passengers."

The meeting also recognized and awarded the top safety performers for the year 2024, and stakeholders shared feedback and suggestions on ways to further promote and prioritize safety.

The discussions culminated in the identification

of specific measures to enhance terminal operations and improve safety culture.

Nafisat Adeniran, Head, Safety Department, emphasized the importance of stakeholders' involvement and participation in safety management, saying, "Stakeholders' involvement and participation is very key in safety management. We used this stakeholder-focused approach to improve our safety culture. This proactive approach is to ensure that everyone is fully involved in safety both in aeronautical and non-aeronautical activities

in line with our safety policy."

The end of year safety meeting was a combination of Apron and terminal safety committee meetings to increase awareness, review incidents, understand roles and responsibilities, and allow both committees to work together towards achieving a common goal.

Ajoke Yinka-Olawuyi, Head, Corporate Communications, said, "We understand that safety is a cornerstone of our operations and the trust passengers place in us. This

meeting reflects our unwavering commitment to fostering a secure environment for travellers, especially during the busy holiday season. At MMA2, we continuously strive to enhance safety measures and ensure that our terminal remains a benchmark for operational excellence in Nigeria."

By taking proactive steps to address potential safety challenges, MMA2 aims to maintain its position as a leading airport terminal in Nigeria and provide a safe and secure environment for all travellers.

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Challenges Facing African Tourism Growth

African tourism has shown substantial potential for growth, but it also faces several challenges that can impact its development. These challenges include:

Infrastructure: Inadequate transportation infrastructure, including roads, airports, and public transportation, can hinder the movement of tourists within and between countries. Poor infrastructure can also increase travel costs and inconvenience.

Visa and Entry Requirements: Stringent visa requirements and complex entry procedures can deter potential tourists. Simplifying visa processes and promoting visa-free travel within regional economic communities can help boost tourism.

Safety and Security: Safety concerns, including crime, political instability, and the threat of terrorism in some regions, can deter tourists. Ensuring safety and security is essential for attracting visitors.

Health Concerns: Outbreaks of diseases like Ebola, malaria, and COVID-19 can negatively impact tourism. Adequate healthcare infrastructure, disease prevention measures, and effective crisis management are critical.

Marketing and Promotion: Many African countries may have limited marketing budgets and face challenges in promoting their destinations effectively on a global scale. Building a strong online presence and collaborating with travel agencies and international media can help overcome this challenge.

Economic and Political Stability: Political instability, corruption, and economic uncertainties in some countries can discourage investment in the tourism sector. Stability is crucial for sustained growth.

Environmental Sustainability: The improper management of natural resources and wildlife can harm the environment and reduce the attractiveness of destinations. Sustainable tourism practices are increasingly important for long-term growth.

Cultural Preservation: Balancing tourism development with the preservation of cultural heritage can be challenging.

Over-tourism and a lack of cultural sensitivity can erode local traditions and authenticity.

Human Capital: A shortage of skilled workers in the tourism industry can impact service quality. Investing in training and education in the hospitality and tourism sectors is essential.

Intra-Africa Travel: African tourism has the potential to grow significantly if more Africans explore their own continent. However, factors such as limited connectivity and affordability can impede intra-Africa travel.

Natural Disasters and Climate Change: African countries are susceptible to natural disasters such as droughts, floods, and hurricanes. Climate change can exacerbate these issues, affecting tourist destinations and infrastructure.

Wildlife Conservation: Poaching and illegal wildlife trade can threaten iconic species and harm the wildlife-based tourism industry. Strong conservation efforts and international cooperation are required to protect Africa's unique biodiversity.

Access to Financing: Access to financing for tourism development, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises, can be a challenge. Financial support and incentives for entrepreneurs can help stimulate growth.

High Seasonal Variability: Some destinations in Africa experience significant fluctuations in tourist arrivals due to seasonal factors, such as weather conditions and wildlife migrations. Diversifying tourism offerings to reduce seasonality can be a solution.

Regulatory and Legal Frameworks: Outdated or inefficient regulatory and legal frameworks can hinder tourism development. Streamlining regulations and encouraging investment can be beneficial.

Addressing these challenges and fostering sustainable tourism practices can help unlock the full potential of African tourism. It requires cooperation between governments, the private sector, local communities, and international organizations to create an environment that is conducive to tourism growth while preserving the continent's natural and cultural treasures.



Gloria Guevara

Next UN Tourism Secretary General Gloria Guevara from Mexico?

Written by Juergen T Steinmetz

Gloria Guevara, the former Mexican Tourism Minister, the former Chief Executive Officer of the World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], and former top advisor to the Saudi Arabian Minister of Tourism, Ahmed bin Aqil al-Khateeb announced her most significant move in her 35-year career in the travel and tourism industry recently.

She announced her candidacy to lead UN-Tourism, the Madrid based UN affiliated agency to lead tourism in the world.

Guevara speaking candidly of country and heritage being Mexican says she loyal to her own country, Mexico as she's trying earn the trust of the UN-Tourism Executive Council to vote for her to become the next Secretary General of this UN special agency, replacing the current controversial Secretary General, Zurab Pololikashvili, starting January 2026.

Gloria Guevara tweeted" I thank the government of Mexico for its support and confidence in my candidacy for the General Secretariat of UN Tourism". Mexico is a tourism power house whose commitment to the sector is recognized worldwide.

"I have worked for 35 years in tourism development, and supporting my country is a priority. Strengthening the Organization and increasing the value it offers to all its members at a global level is essential", she added.

According to her, "It is about Mexico having a place at the table of major decisions regarding tourism, and tourism makes its voice heard; and noted she's grateful for the support of the Mexican government, in particular Foreign Minister Juan Ramón de la Fuente and the Secretary of Tourism Josefina Rodríguez Zamora.

The 123rd session of the UN-Tourism Executive Council will recommend a winner in Madrid, Spain, in its session on 29-30 May, 2025

The next UN Tourism General Assembly holds from October 16-20 will take place in Saudi Arabia, and this appointment will be finalised for a term starting on January 1, 2026.

"It would be great

honour to be the first woman and Mexican to occupy this position," said Guevara Manzo" she said.

Gloria is competing so far with former Greek Tourism Minister Harry Theoharis, Faouzou Deme from Senegal who hinted at announcing his candidacy for Senegal shortly and asked Africa to get ready and stand behind him.

Gloria Guevara, without a doubt, has the most experience in both the public and private sectors. She was proclaimed the most powerful woman when she served as head of WTTC before being offered a job to assist Saudi Arabia.



Eko Hotels and Suites Lagos

Why Seven Million Naira Could Be Your Worst December Decision

Picture this: Travel agencies flooding your social media with glossy images of Dubai's sparkling skylines and South Africa's luxurious resorts, promising the ultimate holiday escape. But behind those glamorous advertisements lies a financial nightmare that could drain your entire year's savings faster than you can say "holiday package."

And this isn't your fault. The economy has been struggling and the value of our currency [naira] has been on a free fall. What this means is that foreign trips or destination holidays, has inadvertently not been priced beyond the reach of most middle-income homes.

But here's the game-changer: What if I told you that the same seven million naira could create a magical, unforgettable holiday experience right here in Lagos, at Eko Hotels and Suites? Not just a stay, but an entire magical adventure designed to make your family's Christmas

holidays are being marketed at prices that would make even the most extravagant spender wince. Seven million naira per person? That's not a holiday; that's a financial heart attack. For a family of four, you're looking at a staggering thirty million naira – a sum that could literally transform lives or secure significant future investments.

But here's the game-changer: What if I told you that the same seven million naira could create a magical, unforgettable holiday experience right here in Lagos, at Eko Hotels and Suites? Not just a stay, but an entire magical adventure designed to make your family's Christmas

absolutely spectacular. What you are bound to discover is that Eko Hotels is more than just a hotel. Imagine waking up in a luxurious suite, knowing you've saved millions while accessing world-class entertainment. Two Broadway theatre musicals that will transport your family to magical storytelling realms. A comedy show that will have everyone in stitches. A circus performance that will make children's eyes sparkle with wonder. Live music that will set your evenings ablaze with excitement. Family game shows that create memories more precious than any passport stamp.

And let's talk about food – not just meals, but daily gourmet buffets that rival international restaurants.

passport or astronomical expenses.

This isn't just about saving money. It's about making a statement. It's about understanding that true luxury isn't about how far you travel, but about the quality of experiences you create. It's about recognizing that memories are built through shared moments of joy, laughter, and connection – not through expensive flight tickets and exhausting international travel.

The global travel industry wants you to believe that happiness is found in distant lands. But happiness? Happiness is right here. Happiness is a family together, enjoying world-class entertainment, comfort, and cuisine, without the stress of international travel.

So, this December, make the choice that your wallet, your family, and your peace of mind will celebrate. Choose Eko Hotels and Suites. Choose an extraordinary local experience. Choose to keep your seven million naira working for you, not flying away with some glossy travel package.

Look, when Africa's foremost brands come together for families, expect a magical Christmas holiday. With Eko Hotels and Zenith bank, there's no other destination this Christmas deserving of your hard earned N7 million.

Listen, Eko Hotels are no longer players, they are game changers – and we are all captivated spectators of the magical holiday moments they are creating for families.

Behold, Mama Africa beckons – honour her with patriotism and embrace destination Lagos. You owe this to your country and her future. Your most magical Christmas is waiting – and it's closer than you think.

Dr. Iyadunni Atinuke Gbadebo, Director of Sales and Marketing, Eko Hotel & Suites.



■ Greed: How African Airlines Are Extorting Passengers With High Fares

It's disheartening when issues like exorbitant airfares overshadow the mission of connecting people. The complexities around African airlines and high-ticket prices due to transit visa requirements can lead to frustration and often raise questions about profit motives versus passenger welfare.

Certainly, the situation isn't solely about airlines' greed. Factors like regulatory requirements, operational costs, and visa policies imposed by other countries contribute significantly to the challenge. African carriers, like any business, need to cover their operational expenses while ensuring they comply with international regulations.

However, there's a responsibility on airlines to advocate for more accessible travel and fairer policies. Collaborative efforts, lobbying for policy changes, and emphasizing the impact on passengers

can drive positive change. Yet, it's crucial to strike a balance between profitability and ensuring that air travel remains accessible to all, especially within the continent.

Whilst we praise the likes of Ethiopian Airlines, Kenya Airways and Egypt Air for their service to Africans, little did we also know that they are nothing but opportunists that are driven by greed and unfaithfulness.

African passengers, mostly Nigerians, are loyal to them through patronage, they shamefully rip them off through exorbitant fares just because they know that most Nigerians and Africans may not have the luxury of securing a transit visa to fly European Carriers that are even cheaper.

Instead of showing gratitude to these Africans, most Nigerians especially that is livewire of some African airlines, they are taken for fools which is

why countries like Nigeria and Ghana must have their national carriers.

Sadly too, the British Carriers, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic Airlines are not different from the African Airlines with their own crazy and exorbitant fares. This writer's investigations reveal that the two British Airlines are selling the lowest economy tickets for as high as \$5,000 for a journey of 6hrs, 30 minutes.

The Middle East or the Gulf Airlines are not different too as their fares are almost the same as the African Airlines.

Without a doubt, a fair fare can potentially alleviate the financial burden on travellers. It's important for airlines to prioritize the facilitation of seamless travel within Africa and still striving for affordability and connectivity while ensuring their operations remain sustainable.

In the last 24 hours, the

cheapest airline to Europe at a little over \$1000 is KLM/Air France and almost \$300 dollars less than any African airlines.

For most Sub Sahara travellers, they must have a transit Schengen Visa or American Visa to be able to travel through Europe; hence the reason the likes of Kenya Airways, Ethiopian Airlines and Egypt Air are extorting Africans.

As the executive director of African Travel Commission [ATC], www.africantravelcommission.org that is promoting the continent, researching for opportunities in the travel and tourism; as well as, advocating for fair air fares, I will advise African countries to have their national carriers, no matter how small it might be for the convenient, economical and pride of the nationals.

By Lucky Onoriode George, Executive Director, African Travel Commission [ATC]

The Private Sector's Role In Nigeria's Tourism Renaissance

The contributions of Zenith Bank and other private sector players like the Bankers Committee are illustrative of a broader trend where businesses are stepping in to play a critical role in Nigeria's tourism and creative economy. While tourism is often viewed through the lens of government interventions in policy, infrastructure, and international promotion, the private sector is proving that it can lead initiatives that have a lasting impact, and quite frankly may be the Messiah that we are looking up to, to pull us out of the depressive state of our economy.

The ripple effect of these private-sector-led initiatives is profound. First, they create a tangible tourism infrastructure that attracts both domestic and international visitors. The rehabilitation of the National Theatre and the promotion of culturally significant events like the Tropical Christmas Wonderland build long-term cultural capital for the country. Second, these initiatives stimulate local economies providing opportunities for small businesses, artisans, and the service industry, all of which are essential for building a robust tourism sector.

Moreover, the private sector's involvement brings an element of sustainability to the tourism industry. By leveraging corporate social responsibility, CSR, frameworks, companies like Zenith Bank ensure that their investments in tourism aren't just seasonal or one-off events, but rather part of a long-term strategy to build cultural institutions and traditions that have enduring value.

As Nigeria continues to navigate its path toward becoming a leading destination for tourism and creativity in Africa, the private sector's role will remain indispensable. By continuing to invest in cultural infrastructure, events, and public spaces, businesses can shape the future of Nigeria's tourism industry, ensuring it thrives in a way that government interventions alone could never achieve. In doing this, we create a more vibrant, inclusive and sustainable tourism ecosystem that benefits the entire nation.

Dr. Gbadebo, a public affairs commentator, wrote from Lagos



Minor Hotels launches its first Zimbabwe property

Minor Hotels To Debut In Zimbabwe With The Launch Of Anantara

Stanley & Livingstone Victoria Falls Hotel

Minor Hotels, an international hotel owner, operator and investor with more than 550 hotels in 56 countries in Asia Pacific, the Middle East, Africa, the Indian Ocean, Europe and the Americas, announces the upcoming addition to its portfolio in Africa – Anantara Stanley & Livingstone Victoria Falls Hotel. A debut for both Minor Hotels and Anantara Hotels & Resorts in Zimbabwe, the property complements The Royal Livingstone Victoria Falls Zambia Hotel by Anantara to complete an unparalleled Victoria Falls offering with luxury accommodation on both sides of the Zambezi River.

Marking a significant step in the Minor Hotels expansion strategy in Africa, Anantara Stanley & Livingstone Victoria Falls Hotel will become the seventh Anantara property in Africa and its Indian Ocean islands when it joins the portfolio on 1st December this year. This addition will be closely followed by Anantara Kafue River

Tented Camp in Zambia, scheduled to open in mid-2025, with the launch of these two properties representing the next exciting steps in the mission of Minor Hotels to grow its footprint on the continent and bring pioneering hospitality to travellers all over the globe.

Located in a picturesque conservation area just a 15-minute drive from Victoria Falls, the hotel is an intimate 16-key all-suite property. Each room can be configured as a double or twin and two sets of suites are interconnected to create private two-bedroom accommodation, ideal for families. Facilities include a gourmet restaurant serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner in the dining room, on the terrace, or in the gardens. The hotel's lounge and bar serve a wide selection of beverages from teas and coffees to beers, wines, and cocktails. A garden swimming pool with shaded loungers allows easy relaxation while complimentary Wi-Fi throughout the hotel keeps every guest connected.

The hotel is family friendly and

offers guests a range of activities for all ages, both at the hotel and around Victoria Falls. A UNESCO World Heritage Site and Natural Wonder of the World, the planet's largest sheet of falling water offers endless opportunities for sightseeing and adventure. These include boat trips to swim in Devil's Pool at the edge of the falls, zip-lining across Batoka Gorge, helicopter flights over the falls and spray, and wildlife-spotting sunset cruises on the Zambezi. Guests can also enjoy game drives and a black rhino conservation experience at the nearby Victoria Falls Private Game Reserve, starting from the hotel's view overlooking an active waterhole. Activities can be organised through the concierge desk while complimentary transfers between the hotel, Victoria Falls town, Victoria Falls International Airport, and Harry Mwanga Nkumbula International Airport make arrival, departure, and exploration straightforward.

"We are excited to announce the addition of a second Anantara property at Victoria Falls,

showcasing our dedication to growing our luxury Anantara brand in Africa," commented Dillip Rajakarier, CEO of Minor Hotels and Group CEO of parent company Minor International. "An elegant boutique hotel in a strategic location close to one of Southern Africa's most iconic attractions, Anantara Stanley & Livingstone Victoria Falls Hotel embodies our commitment to deliver peerless hospitality and distinctive experiences in the world's most desirable locations."

Anantara Hotels & Resorts has an existing portfolio of over 50 properties across Asia, Europe, the Middle East, the Indian Ocean and Africa, with a strong pipeline of further hotels and resorts under development, including in new destinations such as Saudi Arabia and Brazil. Anantara provides unforgettable journeys that encourage guests to immerse themselves in the places, people and stories that make each destination extraordinary and unique, all while staying in unrivalled comfort where every need is anticipated.

Minor Hotels currently operates 27 hotels and resorts in nine countries in Africa, across its Anantara, Avani, NH and Elewana Collection brands, including Avani Victoria Falls Resort in Zambia, the closest hotel to the Falls, and NH Johannesburg Sandton Hotel which launched earlier this year representing the brand's debut on the continent.

Minor Hotels is a global hospitality group operating over 550 hotels, resorts and residences in 56 countries, pursuing its vision of crafting a more passionate and interconnected world. As a hotel owner, operator and investor, Minor Hotels fulfils the needs and desires of today's global travellers through its diverse portfolio of eight hotel brands – Anantara, Avani, Elewana Collection, NH, NH Collection, nhow, Oaks and Tivoli – and a collection of related businesses. Minor Hotels is rapidly accelerating its global growth ambitions, aiming to add more than 200 hotels by the end of 2026.



Festus Keyamo

Keyamo's Favouritism Towards Private Airlines Over National Carrier

On Sunday, December 8th, 2024, the Nigerian Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Management, Festus Keyamo, appeared on Arise Television, where he discussed various issues concerning Nigeria's aviation sector.

However, his statements have sparked significant concerns among Nigerians, particularly regarding the government's stance on national carrier development and its alleged preferential treatment towards private sector airline operators.

While his tenure has

been marked by some noteworthy achievements in the aviation sector, such as the recent refurbishment of airports and the promotion of aviation infrastructure, his comments during the TV interview have raised eyebrows. Specifically, there is a growing perception that the minister is prioritising the interests of private airline operators—who often fail to meet the needs of the Nigerian public—over the urgent need to establish a national carrier.

The Dilemma of the National Carrier

For years, the Nigerian government has promised the establishment of a national carrier, a crucial element for any country seeking to bolster its aviation sector, tourism and ensure a safe, competitive, and reliable air transportation system. The national carrier would not only serve as a flag bearer for Nigeria's global presence but also enhance competition, lower airfares, and ensure the country's economic interests are safeguarded in the aviation sector.

After repeated delay of the controversial launch

of the failed Nigeria Air project, a proposed national carrier that was touted as a game-changer for the aviation sector, no sincere effort has been made. Despite numerous promises and extensive planning, the airline's launch has yet to materialise, and the public is left questioning the government's true intentions. The minister's recent remarks suggest that there may be a reluctance to push forward with the establishment of the national carrier. This, many argue, could be due to a more covert interest in protecting private airline

operators who are benefiting from the current status quo.

The Alleged Favouritism Toward Private Airlines

During the Arise TV interview, he made several comments that raised concerns about his true motivations in the aviation sector. One of the key points that stood out was his suggestion that the private airline operators are currently well-positioned to meet the needs of Nigerian passengers, particularly on international routes.

However, these claims seem detached from the reality that Nigerians have been facing for years: high ticket fares, poor service quality, and a general lack of efficiency by most of the private carriers.

Nigerians have long expressed frustration with the monopolistic practices of Europeans and Gulf States airlines, especially on international routes. The prices of tickets have consistently risen, often without justifiable reasons, and many travellers are forced to pay exorbitant fees for subpar services.

On the home front, private operators have failed to develop the necessary infrastructure, aircraft fleet, or operational efficiency to compete at the global level. The country's aviation sector has witnessed a significant gap in customer satisfaction, and the absence of a national carrier has only exacerbated these problems.

By continuing to favour these private sector airlines, the government appears to be turning a blind eye to the urgent need

Continues on page 6



also ensuring that the country is not at the mercy of foreign airlines and exploitative private operators.

His delay in pushing the national carrier forward, in favour of the current private airline operators, only serves to reinforce the status quo that benefits the few while leaving the many to suffer from unaffordable fares and subpar services.

Though, his tenure as Nigeria's Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Management has seen some positive strides in the sector, his recent remarks and apparent favouritism toward private airline operators raise serious questions about his commitment to the long-term welfare of Nigerian citizens.

By focusing more on the interests of a few private companies rather than expediting the process of establishing a national carrier, Keyamo risks leaving the Nigerian public at the mercy of high-ticket fares and poor service quality as we have witnessed over the years.

The Need for Urgency

The Nigerian aviation sector deserves more than empty promises. It requires urgent reforms that will create a competitive, affordable, and efficient air travel market for all Nigerians. It is time for the government to prioritize the people's interests and push ahead with the establishment of a national carrier, a step that would ensure the country's aviation industry finally takes its rightful place on the global stage.

By Lucky George, Executive Director, African Travel Commission [ATC] based in Accra, Ghana.

for reform. Instead of creating a competitive, affordable, and efficient aviation environment, the minister's apparent allegiance to private airline operators perpetuates a system where Nigerians are left to bear the brunt of poor service and high-ticket costs.

High Ticket Fares and Limited Capacity

One of the most glaring issues facing Nigerian passengers today is the sky-high ticket fares, particularly on international routes. These inflated prices have become an everyday reality for Nigerian travelers, who are forced to bear the consequences of limited competition in the market.

Keyamo's failure to accelerate the process of establishing a national carrier, which would

introduce competition to the market, has allowed private airline operators to set prices without considering the welfare of Nigerian passengers.

Moreover, many of the private airlines currently operating in Nigeria lack the capacity to truly meet the needs of the nation. Their fleets are outdated, frequently under maintenance, and limited in size. This has resulted in flight cancellations, delays, and a general lack of consistency in service delivery.

If the Nigerian government is truly committed to improving the aviation sector and serving the public interest, it would fast-track the establishment of a national carrier that would introduce both operational excellence and affordable pricing.

The Real Interests at Play

Whilst the minister has repeatedly expressed his commitment to improving Nigeria's aviation sector, critics argue that his actions suggest otherwise. By prioritising private sector operators over the development of a national carrier, the minister is perceived to be catering to the interests of a select few rather than the larger population of Nigerian citizens who stand to benefit from a more robust, competitive, and affordable aviation landscape.

Private airline operators in Nigeria have significant influence, and many have close ties with political figures, making it easier for them to lobby for policies that favour their business interests. Keyamo's ongoing support of these airlines,

despite their shortcomings, raises questions about whether the government's policies are genuinely in the best interest of the Nigerian people.

The establishment of a national carrier should no longer be delayed. It would provide Nigerians with the choice of affordable, efficient air travel while



Dr Omar Alieu Touray, President, ECOWAS Commission.

and accelerating the trade growth and investment attraction of coastal urban West Africa, already the most prosperous part of this vast region.

And just as the EU's wealth and dynamism proved a powerful attraction for former communist states, perhaps rising prosperity across Ecowas will eventually entice the now disenchanted further north states into rejoining the bloc.

Construction of the proposed four-to-six lane motorway is forecast to create 70,000 jobs, with

completion ambitiously targeted for 2030.

And the plan is to acquire a sufficiently broad strip of land along the route to later accommodate a new railway line, linking the big port cities along the Gulf of Guinea. Existing rail routes extend inland, but there is no rail line along the coast.

The road will connect many of West Africa's largest cities - Abidjan, with 8.3 million people, Accra [4 million], Lomé [2 million] and Lagos, estimated at close to 20

million or perhaps even more.

Several of the cities are key gateway ports for the flow of trade in and out of the region.

Already the bureaucratic hassles and risks of petty corruption that have so often complicated life for drivers passing from one country to the next are beginning to wane.

At many border crossings, modern one-stop frontier posts, where officials from both countries work side by side to check passports and transit documents,

have replaced the assorted huts where drivers and passengers queued at a succession of counters while one set of border police and customs officers worked their way through the formalities.

And now the proposed highway and rail line promise to further speed the flow of trade and travel between the coastal economies, boosting competitiveness and integration and transforming the region's attraction for investors - just as the EU transformed trade and development across the European continent.

And that process of economic and administrative integration of course had enormous political consequences.

It acted as a powerful incentive for countries still outside the bloc to improve economic governance, strengthen democracy and tackle corruption, in the hope of qualifying for membership.

Perhaps Ecowas can emulate this precedent, and lure the dissident states into re-joining, particularly if flagship projects such as the transport corridor give a real fillip to growth.

For not only do Mali, Niger and Burkina face severe development and security challenges, but they are also all landlocked, and heavily dependent on their coastal neighbours, through transport, trade and labour migration.

Huge volumes of trade, formal and informal, flow across the borders.

Livestock from the three countries in the Sahel is exported on the hoof to feed city dwellers in Dakar, Abidjan and Lagos.

Onions and potatoes grown in Niger's arid climate are prized by coastal household shoppers, while Ivorian, Ghanaian and Nigerian manufactured goods are exported in the opposite direction.

Millions of Burkinabè and Malians are settled in Ivory Coast, a mainstay of the workforce for its cocoa plantations.

Moreover, the coup leaders are not pulling out of the West African CFA franc, an eight-country single currency, backed by France, that hampers competitiveness but provides a solid defence against inflation and monetary instability.

Yet these deep ties between the Sahelian countries and coastal West Africa were not sufficient to deter the military regimes in Mali, Burkina and Niger from announcing their withdrawal from Ecowas.

Hostility to the bloc, which they portray as bullying and arrogant, has paid political dividends, boosting their popularity at home. And Morocco talks of opening up an alternative trade corridor to its Atlantic ports, which could broaden the options.

But if the remaining Ecowas countries can accelerate their own drive for prosperity, pruning back trade barriers and pressing forward with breakthrough projects such as the coastal highway and rail line, then gradually they may salve today's political bruises and mistrusts and draw the Sahel states back into a reunified West African regional identity.

Paul Melly is a consulting fellow with the Africa Programme at Chatham House in London.

More Pictures From the Exhibition



Folorunso Coker at the NTD stand.



Lucky Onoriode George in red with friends after his award.



Across section of guests.



Dr. Idi Hong, former Minister of State for Tourism, Culture and National Orientation in white.



Wale Ojo-Lanre, Director General, Bureau of Tourism Development, Ekiti State, Otunba Ayo Olumoko and Ahmed Ojuolape.



Nkereuwem Onung, President, Federation of Tourism Associations of Nigeria [FTAN] with some of his executives after been decorated as a fellow of Institute of Tourism Professionals of Nigeria [ITPN].



British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Richard Montgomery

UK Denies Harsh Visa Policies Against Nigerians

The United Kingdom has issued around 300,000 visas to Nigerians over the past few years, according to the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Richard Montgomery.

Montgomery described the relationship between Nigeria and the UK as robust, emphasising that Nigeria is one of the major beneficiaries of the UK's post-Brexit migration policies.

Montgomery addressed claims of harsh immigration policies, asserting that the UK's visa policies have been favourable to Nigerians.

"I have to contest this picture because the UK in the last couple of years has granted around 300,000 new visas to Nigerians which far exceeds any other visa relationship which Nigeria has with any other country," he said on

Monday's edition of Channels Television's Sunrise Daily.

"The trends have been really positive post-Brexit. Nigeria has been a major beneficiary of the post-Brexit migration visa rules."

He noted that the number of work visas granted to Nigerians has increased significantly, rising from 10,000-20,000 annually a few years ago to 80,000-90,000 in recent years.

"The number of people getting work visas that go to the UK has gone from something like 10 to 20,000 in about six, seven years ago to 80-90,000 in the last two years – last year and this year," the envoy said but admitted that student numbers are down.

He also highlighted the contributions of Nigerians in the UK, particularly in sectors such as social care,

describing their roles as vital. Nigerians, he added, account for approximately 10 percent of all visas issued by the UK in the past two years.

"So, I would like to emphasise how huge the relationship is. It outstrips any other visa relationship that Nigeria has with any other single country in my understanding," Montgomery noted.

Montgomery assured prospective applicants that the UK visa approval rate remains high for those who apply with proper documentation and evident

Although he acknowledged a decline in the number of Nigerian students studying in the UK, Montgomery underscored the strong ties between the two nations, which he said surpass Nigeria's visa relationships with other countries.

Radisson Hotel Group Appoints Ahmed Raza As District Director For Nigeria

Radisson Hotel Group is delighted to announce the promotion of Ahmed Raza to District Director Nigeria. Based in Lagos, Ahmed now has added to his current portfolio, Park Inn by Radisson Abeokuta, Radisson Blu Hotel Ikeja, Radisson Hotel Ikeja and Park Inn by Radisson Serviced Apartments VI.

Effective mid-November 2024, Ahmed will oversee operations across Nigeria, continuing to build on the Group's growing presence in the country.

Ahmed, who has demonstrated quality leadership and achievements and is driven by passion and service philosophy, joined Radisson Hotel Group in 2017 as Executive Assistant Manager at the Radisson Blu Hotel Anchorage, Lagos, Nigeria. He was then promoted to General Manager of Radisson Blu Anchorage, where he has currently based since September 2020.

Before joining Radisson Hotel Group, Ahmed was Director of Food & Beverage for Intercontinental Hotel Group in Nigeria as well as Acting Hotel Manager. Beginning his journey with Hilton Houston Hotel in 2005, Ahmed has since taken on more roles, expanding his wealth of experience and showing extensive knowledge of the Nigerian market.

In congratulating Ahmed on his new role, Sandra Kneubuhler, Managing Director of Africa at Radisson Hotel Group, said, "Ahmed has proven his extensive experience

and local market insight. In his most recent role as General Manager, he has led his team to consistently deliver exceptional results. Ahmed is a team player who is powered by passion and is forward-thinking in his dealings. I do not doubt that he will be equally successful at delivering results in his new area of responsibility, and I wish him every success."

About Radisson Hotel Group

Radisson Hotel Group is an international hotel group operating in EMEA and APAC with over 1,430 hotels in operation and under development in +95 countries. The international hotel group is rapidly expanding with a plan to significantly grow its portfolio. The Group's overarching brand promise is Every Moment Matters with a signature. Yes, I Can! Service ethos. The Radisson family of brands portfolio includes Radisson Collection, aparthotel, Radisson Blu, Radisson, Radisson RED, Radisson Individuals, Park Plaza, Park Inn by Radisson, Country Inn & Suites by Radisson, and Prize by Radisson brought together under one commercial umbrella brand Radisson Hotels.

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Bola Ahmed Tinubu, President of Nigeria

ECOWAS: Can Abidjan To Lagos Dream Super Highway Ever Materialise?

Faced with regional disunity, West Africa is poised to start work on a 1,028km [689 miles] highway from Ivory Coast's main city Abidjan - through Ghana, Togo and Benin - to Nigeria's biggest city Lagos.

According to report, construction is supposed to start in 2026 and pledges of \$15.6bn [£12.3bn] have already been mobilised

from a range of funders and investors. Just as Western Europe matched the Soviet-led communist bloc with a "Common Market" that later evolved into today's trading powerhouse, the European Union [EU], so Ecowas may find that a drive for prosperity and growth proves to be its most effective response to

the wave of military coups by the African Development Bank, were commissioned. But when these were presented last recently, the timing could hardly have come at a better moment for reinvigorating the battered self-confidence of Ecowas [Economic Community of West African States]. Neither traditional diplomacy, nor sanctions,

Preparatory studies, led

nor even the threat of military intervention in Niger, had managed to push the juntas into organising elections and restoring civilian government, as required by Ecowas governance rules.

The defiant regimes declared they would leave the 15-member bloc altogether.

They have subsequently spurned the remaining members' efforts to persuade them to stay, although the Ecowas envoy, Senegal's new, young President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who shares their nationalistic outlook, is still trying.

Until this crisis, Ecowas was Africa's most cohesive and politically integrated regional grouping, with a creditable record of crisis management and even the deployment of peacekeepers in troubled member states.

With the departure of Mali, Burkina and Niger, the bloc will lose 76 million of its 446 million people and more than half its total geographical land area, with the loss of vast tracts of the Sahara - a painful blow to prestige and self-belief.

Supporters of the three states pulling out of Ecowas have compared it to Brexit, the UK's withdrawal from the EU in 2020.

The shock of the three countries' withdrawal may boost those pushing for tougher governance and democracy rules.

Meanwhile, the ambitious coastal transport corridor project, conceived to support economic development, will also serve a political purpose - demonstrating the remaining member countries' capacity to work together

continues on page 15



Lucky Onoriode George at the Python Museum, Quidah, Benin Republic.



Lucky Onoriode George with Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka at the Python Museum, Quidah, Benin Republic both of African Travel Commission [ATC], Didier, a tour guide at the shrine.



Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka with Didier, a tour guide at the shrine.



Sajid Khan, General Manager, Tang Palace Hotel, Accra with Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka.



Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka at Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park and Mausoleum



Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka .



Lucky Onoriode George with Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka at the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park and Mausoleum



John Adzer; Lucky Onoriode George; Nkereuwem Onung, President, Federation of Tourism Associations of Nigeria [FTAN]; Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka; and Wale Ojo-Lanre, Director General, Bureau of Tourism Development, Ekiti State.



Lucky Onoriode George receiving his award at the Event Gala Night.

More Pictures From the Exhibition



Lucky Onoriode George at the Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC)



Lucky Onoriode George; Nkereuwem Onung, President, Federation of Tourism Associations of Nigeria [FTAN] and Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka.



Lucky Onoriode George; Nkereuwem Onung, President, Federation of Tourism Associations of Nigeria [FTAN] and Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka.

National Transport And Tourism Summit Exhibition And Expo 2024 held December 3rd to 4th at the Velodrome, National Stadium, Abuja



Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka; Chief, Abiodun Odusanwo, President, Institute of Tourism Professional of Nigeria [ITPN], organizer, National Tourism Transportation Summit and Expo [NTTS/E] and Lucky Onoriode George.



Justina Ovat with Prof. Bassey Esu both of University of Calabar and others.



Cross section of some guests.



Lucky Onoriode George; John Adzar; Aliyu Badaki; Nkereuwem Onung, President, Federation of Tourism Associations of Nigeria [FTAN]; Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka and Wale Ojo-Lanre, Director General, Bureau of Tourism Development, Ekiti State.

Lucky Onoriode George; Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka and Wale Ojo-Lanre.



Lucky Onoriode George; Justina Ovat and Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka



Folorunso Coker with Lucky Onoriode George



Lucky Onoriode George Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka



Justina Ovat with Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka



Lucky Onoriode George with Barr. Anastasia Ugbaka.



John Adzar; Lucky Onoriode George and Wale Ojo-Lanre.