

Prime Minister Edouard Ngirente on May 12, 2025 urged African countries to strengthen regional cooperation, saying it is key to unlocking economic opportunities in the continent's air transport sector.

Speaking at the opening of the 13th African Airlines Association (AFRAA) summit in Kigali, Ngirente emphasized that collective efforts are essential for the growth and sustainability of aviation across Africa.

"Rwanda's goals cannot be achieved in isolation," Ngirente said. "We all know Africa's development is interconnected. A shared African airspace can reduce costs and open up new economic opportunities across the continent."

The summit brought together aviation leaders, policymakers and stakeholders from across the region to discuss the future of African air transport.

Ngirente cited the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as key frameworks that can transform the aviation industry, but warned that their success depends on improved cooperation and communication infrastructure.



The prime minister praised national carrier RwandAir for its growing role in connecting Africa with other global destinations. He said the airline now flies to more than 100 destinations through direct routes and partnerships with other airlines.

RwandAir has also seen a surge of interest among youth, with nearly 2,000 applicants this year for its cadet pilot training program, Ngirente said.

Rwanda is making major investments in aviation infrastructure, including the expansion of Kigali International Airport and the construction of the new Bugesera International Airport.

"These are not just aviation projects," Ngirente said. "They are catalysts for economic growth, trade, tourism and job creation."

The Bugesera airport, being built in partnership with Qatar Airways, is expected to be completed in 2028 at a cost of \$2 billion. The first phase of the new Kigali airport is scheduled for completion in 2027, with capacity to serve 7 million passengers

annually. A second phase, due in 2032, will double that capacity to 14 million passengers.