

In a significant development, the President William Ruto of Kenya on Monday declared that his country will eliminate visa requirements for all African visitors by the end of end of 2023.

He made the announcement while addressing an audience in Congo-Brazzaville, emphasizing the need for Africa to move away from visa restrictions that hinder the continent's progress.

"People cannot travel, business people cannot travel, entrepreneurs cannot travel, we all become net losers. By the end of this year [2023], no African will be required to have a visa to come to Kenya. Our children from this continent should not be locked in borders in Europe and also be locked in borders in Africa", he said

He highlighted the importance of allowing the youth of Africa to freely explore the continent and not be confined by borders, whether in Europe or within Africa. The president's announcement was met with enthusiastic cheers from the conference attendees.

"It is time we realise that having visa restrictions amongst ourselves is working against us," he added.

According to a 2022 AU-backed report, only three African countries namely Seychelles, The Gambia and Benin offer entry to all African citizens without a visa.

However, Africa's Visa Openness Index, which assesses the extent of openness of each African country to visitors from other African nations, indicates that most countries are gradually simplifying entry processes and reducing restrictions on travelers from other

Kenya, for instance, was ranked 31st out of 54 African states on the Visa Openness Index in 2022.

While eliminating all visa restrictions remains a formidable challenge, the Visa Openness Index report recommends several alternative measures, including reducing visa fees, standardizing visa-on-arrival for African visitors, and implementing a secure e-visa system. These steps aim to simplify and encourage intra-African travel and economic integration.