Rwanda’s national air carrier, RwandAir has announced the launch of a new route to Bangui, Capital of the Central African Republic. The flights starting on 3 February are part of its efforts to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new route will be linked to the existing route from Kigali to Douala, Cameroon, and will be operated twice a week on Wednesdays and Sundays by a Boeing 737 aircraft, the airline said in a statement.

The new service will open up a new “lucrative” market for RwandAir and help stimulate trade in the region and beyond Africa, RwandAir CEO Yvonne Manzi Makolo said in the statement.

It will also strengthen the growing trade ties in Africa and bolster Rwanda’s growing economy, he said.

Since 1 August 2020, RwandAir has gradually resumed commercial flights to most of its African destinations and some long-haul destinations such as Belgium, Britain, and China.

The latest announcement came two weeks after the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) predicted prolonged depressed demand for air travel in the near term, with downside risks to global air travel recovery predominating in the first quarter of 2021, and any improvement in the global picture only by the second quarter of 2021.

RwandAir flew to 29 destinations across 24 countries throughout Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia before it suspended passenger flights in March last year.

Last April, the airline acknowledged that it has been “greatly impacted” by the COVID-19 pandemic and has to implement several temporary measures to cut expenditure, including the reduction of employees’ salaries, to “protect the company’s future well-being and to avoid laying off staff.”