

***Dakar, Senegal, December 9 (Infosplusgabon) - Senegal's new International Blaise Diagne Airport (AIBD), a 525-million-euro infrastructure masterpiece, co-financed with the African Development Bank (AfDB), opened on Thursday, confirming the Bank's commitment to Africa's air transportation development, and a strategic component of the High 5 agenda to integrate Africa.***

The AfDB President, Akinwumi Adesina, said, "I applaud the great leadership of President Macky Sall. He is a visionary with a clear commitment to the delivery of transformative projects. This airport will improve regional connectivity, drive down costs of transportation, grow and transform the economy. The African Development Bank is proud of Senegal."

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) forecasts an average annual passenger increase of 5% over the next 20 years.

According to Pierre Guislain, the Bank's Vice-President, Private Sector, Infrastructure and Industrialization, "Africa must be ready to capitalize on this opportunity. We are delighted that our efforts to fund critical quality infrastructure across the continent are showing results. The new Airport brings us closer to winning the West African aviation connectivity and logistics hub battle."

The Bank will continue to support the development of an industry which is a major trigger for social and economic progress and life-changing impact on the continent, he said.

The AfDB contributed 70 million euros in loans and acted as a Mandated Lead Arranger to facilitate an additional 140 million euros in loans. Other major financiers are the Islamic Development Bank, Agence Française de Développement, the Saudi Fund and the West African Development Bank (BOAD).

The aviation project has already had significant socio-economic impact in Senegal, creating 3,000 local jobs during the construction phase and 427 full-time jobs for the operational phase. Additional jobs are expected in engineering, maintenance, information technologies and security in the next few years.

The state-of-the-art airport facility will be a catalyst for the emergence of small and medium enterprises, attract regional and foreign investments and boost Senegal's tourism potential.

With a 42,000m<sup>2</sup> passenger terminal and a 12,800m<sup>2</sup> cargo terminal building that is designed to handle 50,000 tons of cargo and 80,000 aircraft movements annually, the new airport resolves a lingering terminal capacity challenge; offers a long-term solution to intra-African economic activity; and resolves a perennial problem of low levels of aviation connectivity in West and Central Africa.

Approximately 3 million passengers are expected to go through AIBD annually.

In the last decade, the AfDB has invested close to US\$ 1 billion in the aviation sector, including funding for airport construction and expansion in Morocco, Tunisia, Cape Verde, and Ghana.

Recently, the Bank approved a US\$ 160 million loan for the expansion of the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) in Kenya, and has also financed investments and capacity building in air traffic and navigation, as well as airline financing.

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## Senegal's New Airport opens

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