



# NIGERIA'S AVIATION CENTENARY:

A REGULATORY REVIEW  
AND OUTLOOK



# INTRODUCTION

Nigeria marks 100 years since the first documented flight into the country, which took place in Kano on 1 December 1925. This anniversary provides a unique opportunity to reflect on the evolution of the Nigerian aviation legal and regulatory framework, a dynamic sector governed by comprehensive domestic legislation and stringent international standards. As the Nigerian aviation industry steps into its second century, regulatory compliance remains paramount, particularly for foreign investors, aircraft owners/lessors, operators, and maintenance organisations engaging with the Nigerian market.

Nigeria's aviation legal framework is founded on the necessity of maintaining high safety and security measures that are compliant with the International Civil Aviation Organisation ("ICAO") standards. The sector is primarily governed by the Civil Aviation Act 2022 ("CAA 2022"), which modernised the legal framework in line with ICAO's standards and strengthened safety, economic regulation, security, and consumer protection. The key institutions that regulate the aviation sector in Nigeria include the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority, which regulates aviation safety, operations and economic regulation; the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, which manages the airport infrastructure; and the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency which provides air navigation services to aircraft operating within the Nigerian airspace.

## Legal milestones and the CAA 2022

The CAA 2022 represents the most significant recent legal milestone, and it has brought Nigeria's aviation laws into alignment with contemporary global standards. Key legal features of the CAA 2022 include the enhancement of the enforcement powers of the NCAA. The NCAA now has broader powers to impose stricter sanctions and administrative fines for the breach of the safety regulations in the CAA 2022, emphasising a zero-tolerance approach to non-compliance.

The CAA 2022 also provides stronger rights for air travellers, mandating clear rules regarding flight delays, cancellations, denied boarding, and baggage loss. This requires all airlines and airport operators to update their operational procedures to minimise consumer liability. The NCAA has been actively enforcing the passenger rights provisions against both local and foreign airline operators.

There have also been significant developments in infrastructure improvement and financial restructuring within the aviation sector in recent years. The Federal Government continues to pursue the enhancement of major airport infrastructure through privatization and the granting of concessions. Several states have also established state-owned airports to stimulate economic development within their respective jurisdictions.

**Aircraft Registration and Financing:** The Nigerian legal framework for aircraft registration and financing has been updated to better support aircraft financing and leasing transactions. The signing of the Cape Town Convention Practice Direction in September 2024 aimed to streamline aircraft leasing and enforcement by providing clear legal rules for the courts to apply. The NCAA has also established the framework to ensure there is full compliance with the Cape Town Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment and its Protocol on Matters Specific to Aircraft Equipment, which is essential for guaranteeing secured creditor rights and paving the way for foreign financiers to do business in Nigeria.

**Bilateral Air Service Agreements:** Nigeria continues to explore entering into Bilateral Air Service Agreements ("BASA") to expand international air connectivity, and the federal government continues to seek ways to enforce the terms of existing BASA to benefit local airlines that operate on international routes.

## Conclusion

Nigeria's 100-year aviation history reflects a legal and regulatory framework that is anchored in global best practices and driven by continuous modernisation. For all stakeholders, particularly airline operators, aircraft asset owners, lessors and investors, a proactive engagement with the provisions of the CAA 2022 and strict adherence to the directives of the NCAA are the fundamental requirements for sustainable and efficient operations within the Nigerian airspace.

UUBO felicitates with the Federal Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Mr. Festus Keyamo, SAN, the NCAA, the FAAN, local and international airline operators and all who operate in the Nigerian aviation ecosystem on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of aviation in Nigeria. This milestone reflects our resilience as a nation and determination to ensure that the aviation sector, which is critical to the economic and social advancement of any country, continues to develop and remain relevant. We look forward, with great expectations, that the next 100 years will bring about pivotal changes in the Nigerian aviation sector across all areas of intersection in the stakeholders' value chain.

Contact us at [AviationTeam@uubo.org](mailto:AviationTeam@uubo.org) if you have any questions on any aspect of this note or require further information on the Nigerian aviation sector.