



## UNITED STATES OF AFRICA? AFRICAN UNION LAUNCHES ALL-AFRICA PASSPORT

<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/07/05/africa/african-union-passport/>  
<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2016-07-18/201815/>

The first of the electronic passports were unveiled at the AU summit in Kigali, Rwanda, where they were issued to heads of state and senior officials. The Union aims to distribute them to all African citizens by 2020.

“The opening ceremony was marked by a symbolic act of Pan-Africanism with the launch of the African Union (AU) passport aimed at facilitating the free movement of people on the continent,” the Union announced in a statement.

The passports represent a key plank of the Agenda 2063 action plan, which emphasizes the need for greater continental integration, drawing on the popular vision of Pan-African unity. Freedom of movement has been a longstanding priority among

member states, as enshrined in previous agreements such as the 1991 Abuja Treaty. Common passports have already been adopted for several regions, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Currently, just 13 African states are open to all African citizens without advance visas, with many placing severe restrictions on travel. A recent report from the African Development Bank advised that easing entrance requirements would support economic growth, citing the case of Rwanda, which saw GDP and tourism revenues climb after abolishing visas.

AU Director for Political Affairs Dr. Khabele Matlosa believes opening borders will have a profound effect for workers at

the lower end of the scale.

“We have a problem now that young people are risking their lives to cross the Sahara Desert or travel on boats to Europe,” says Matlosa. “If we open opportunities in Africa we reduce that risk.”

The Director has been studying the example of Europe, but believes a closer African Union will not be so threatened by concerns about immigration or loss of sovereignty.

“Africa is a continent of migrants so we are not as suspicious of refugees,” he says. “This is a test of our Pan-Africanism, the doctrine which underpins the African Union’s existence. We are committed to this philosophy.”

However Matlosa acknowledges the target of providing all citizens with the passports by 2018 is ambitious, conceding that full coverage may not be achieved until several years later.

“Not all countries have the same level of technology needed for the biometric system and to register their citizens,” says David Zounmenou, senior research fellow at the Institute for Secu-

rity Studies. “The timeframe is too short -- 2020 would be a fine effort.”

Zounmenou adds that the closer union will face a complaint familiar to European counterparts -- that of more powerful states overriding smaller members.

“Not every country will buy into it,” he says. “Visa revenue is an important source of income for some countries and removing it will affect the local economy unless there is compensation.”

But Zounmenou believes that common passports will support international trade within the continent, reducing the widespread dependence on Western goods, and offer new opportunities to many citizens.

“Many people ask ‘what are the practical benefits of being a member of the AU?’” he says. “This can be one of the most important social and economic responses, which allows business to flow, students to travel, and people to move from one corner of the continent to another.”

Critics have suggested open borders risk strengthening terror groups and organized crime, but Zounmenou disagrees.

“One key advantage is that we will have centralized records to show who is going where,” he says.

Many see the launch of the Pan-African passport as one of the milestones for this year’s AU Summit—with expectations that it would facilitate the seamless mobility of Africans and ease trade across the continent, consequently leading to the continent’s economic transformation.

The passport seeks to create advantageous visa-regimes across the continent and later on create a pathway for a visa-free Africa, under the AU agenda of the “African We Want”

Through his Twitter handle, Lamin Manneh, the One-UN Rwanda Resident Coordinator, described the launch of the African passport as “One of the high moments” of the summit.

Last week, Louise Mushiki-

wabo, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, said Rwanda has moved ahead, with popularising the Pan-African passport, with modalities already in place to print and issue the sophisticated travel document sooner than later.

AU Deputy Chairman Erastus Mwencha says not one country in the African Union has objected to the plan. So it only won’t go through if parliaments block it. But again, the details of the plan are sketchy. However, many African countries might be reluctant to open their borders, fearing a huge influx of people from other countries. This might be especially true of South Africa, which currently hosts large numbers of migrants from across the continent, and has seen xenophobic attacks.

(ARD)

## **PAKISTAN RAILWAYS POISED TO GET MASSIVE FUNDING FROM CPEC AND CAREC**

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/08/18/business/pak-railways-poised-to-get-massive-funding-from-cpec-and-carec/>  
<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1119229/8-2b-railtrack-upgrade-project-wins-go-ahead/>

A silver lining is on the horizon for Pakistan Railways, as it may be able to attract multi-billion dollar investment for the upgradation as well as deployment of new railway infrastructure across the country under two regional economic unions, the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) and China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The railways are going to link Central Asia and China with Pakistani ports of Karachi and Gwadar.

An official source said that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has started the process to assess the financial needs for upgradation of 461 km main line (ML-1) between Lahore and Peshawar, under its CAREC Railway Connectivity Investment Programme. The financing is likely to start flowing from next year.

ADB will be providing multi-tranche financing facility (MFF) to make the railway system more efficient and competitive. Improved railway corridor of Lahore-Peshawar will improve Pakistan Railways' institutional efficiency. Financial assistance will also be provided for Railways' modernization, IT-based accounting system and transforming and migrating accounting data into the new accounting system.

According to the project documents, the cost of upgrading of Pakistan Railways existing Mainline (ML-I) and establishment of a dry port near Havelian is \$8.2 billion, which the Chinese government will finance with a \$7 billion concessionary loan. This project is part of \$46 billion CPEC package and is covered under the CPEC Framework Agreement, signed during the April 2015 visit of Chinese

president to Pakistan.

The ministry of Railway has shared their plans which include the upgrade of Karachi-Peshawar main line (ML-1) and the extension of ML-2 from Jacobabad to Gwadar via Basima to both CAREC and CPEC. Under the plan, which is expected to be completed by 2020, 411 km railway track between Lahore-Peshawar section of ML-1 will be upgraded and dualised together with new signaling and telecommunications system, including power supply for these systems, and upgraded passenger facilities at Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Peshawar stations.

Except for Pakistan, railways in all CAREC countries have more freight carriers than passenger tariff. CAREC railways have increased freight traffic volumes which shows the large potential for PR to freight forward to and from CAREC countries. Domestic market is

large in Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and China.

In the past, the railways infrastructure plans always received a cold shoulder from the government, but now the situation has changed as multilateral institutions are interested in linking Pakistani ports with China and Central Asia. Now the government wants to attract investment in railways infrastructure and China is asked to finance upgradation of strategically located ML-1 which connects major population centers in three provinces.

In addition to this, an official source has mentioned that there are further plans to link Gwadar port, Kandahar, Kabul and Dushanbe, with another plan which will have a railway link between Gwadar and Quetta, and they will be extended all the way to China as well.

(HUF)

# MANIS REGIONAL FORUM; A PROSPECTIVE FORUM IN THE FUTURE

<http://www.aspistrategist.org.au/manis-way-sweeten-regional-cooperation/>  
[http://bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/2016-08/cog\\_26.pdf](http://bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/2016-08/cog_26.pdf)

Manis is Indonesian word for 'sweet' that also could symbolize a grouping of maritime partners on southern edge of Southeast Asia consisting Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and Singapore. A MANIS regional maritime cooperation forum, could address a vast range of concerns for the member countries. In the forum, members could consult, share experiences, and cooperate on several topics; illegal fisheries, natural resources, smuggling and traditional crime, trafficking in drugs, endangered wildlife, and weapons. Besides, it also could address region-wide challenges such as illegal immigration and terrorism as well as improve search and rescue and natural disaster mitigation coordination.

This forum could take regional cooperation beyond the levels achieved by the former forum, Bali Process to help bet-

ter address the implications of a new security agenda on environmentally vulnerable communities and climate change. This would involve collaborative government, university and think tank teams from the various participating countries meeting to discuss a range of possibilities including police, immigration, border security, legal, judicial, environmental, intelligence, financial, and other working groups.

A MANIS Regional Forum would not make redundant the region's other bilateral and multilateral forums and arrangements. With a maritime focus and additional resources, perhaps the respective Ministries of Defence may be better placed to take the lead in engaging with the MANIS forum. This forum could have overlapping areas of interest and engagement but with a focus on enabling the principal MANIS nations to

proceed with decision making when intractable barriers prevent resolution in other forums.

With a growing range of maritime and non-traditional security challenges, there is a compelling argument to be made for the countries of Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and Singapore to join hands and work together in a new way. This could be something far more

than a straightforward multilateral forum. With unprecedented and growing challenges, there is an opportunity for the MANIS countries to work together across a wide range of domains to bolster shared regional stability. The way ahead involves respectful, patient, collegial and determined collaborative engagement to sweeten regional ties.

(MMJ)