



# **SOAD LAW 0014**

**Melvin Brown  
President of the Parliament**

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## **Transport, Connections and Pan-Africanism**

**A Law Introduced by Mrs Geneviève Clarkson, Minister of Transports,**

**and**

**Cheikh Modibo Diara, Minister of Science and Industry.**

## Preamble

Pan-Africanism was born from a vision, but that vision would never have existed without roads, travel and without the multiple circulations that brought into contact the peoples of Africa and its Diaspora. From the great trans-Saharan routes, to the trade networks of the Nile Valley, the Swahili routes of the Indian Ocean, the expeditions of the rulers of Mali such as the pilgrimage of Mansa Musa or the legendary maritime voyage of his brother toward the Americas, African history is inseparable from the paths it has traced. Everywhere, roads carried ideas, exchanges, knowledge, languages, spiritualities, and the shared memory that today form the foundation of Pan-African identity.

It was again thanks to roads and travel that, in modern times, Aimé Césaire (Martinique), Léopold Sédar Senghor (Sénégal) and Léon Damas (French Guyana) could meet in Paris and jointly found the Négritude movement. It is because of travel that, in the early 20th century, the first Pan-African Congresses could be held, gathering activists such as W.E.B. Du Bois (USA), Blaise Diagne (Senegal), George Padmore (Trinidad), Alice Kinloch (South Africa), Princess Lara Kofoworola (Nigeria), whose struggles gave birth to the movement of which we are the heirs. Pan-Africanism is both a history and a geography: without mobility, no encounter; without encounter, no collective consciousness; without consciousness, no political action.

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But Africa's roads also tell the darker side of our history: that of capture, confinement, and deportation. From the late 15th century onward, European powers relied on navigation technologies originating from Asia—such as the compass, the astrolabe, the sternpost rudder, and nautical charts—to embark on increasingly distant expeditions. The caravel replaced the caravan. Soon, travel ceased to be a space of exchange and became a vehicle of abduction. Millions of Africans were torn from their villages, forced into deadly marches, and packed into coastal forts. They were no longer merchants but merchandise, transported across the Atlantic during the “Middle Passage,” where millions perished.

In the Americas, however, new roads emerged—the roads of resistance and freedom. Maroons fled into the mountains, like the Blue Mountains of Jamaica, or into the jungle where the Palenques of Colombia and the Quilombos of Brazil were born. In the United States, others sought the “Underground Railroad,” those secret routes leading from the slaveholding South to the free cities of the North, while trying to escape the dogs and the bounty hunters. Toussaint Louverture, an exceptional horseman, made mobility a strategy: it is because he mastered the terrain, appeared where no one expected him, created openings and forged passages (hence the name Louverture, « opening » in French) that he was able to defeat Napoleon's armies.

Evidently, freedom is a journey—but so is death: in the Caribbean, some enslaved people asked that their bodies be symbolically sent back to “Guinea,” meaning Africa, accomplishing in spirit the journey that violence had forbidden them in the material world.

After the abolitions, another form of mobility emerged: the “Back to Africa” movement. Marcus Garvey founded the Black Star Line, linking the Americas to Africa and announcing the return of

the dispersed peoples. Liberia and Sierra Leone are the heirs of these voyages to the motherland. Others conquered the skies: Bessie Coleman became the first African American woman pilot; Eugene Bullard, born in Georgia, became a pilot in the French army during World War I. Yet Afro-descendants did not merely use new means of transportation: they created and improved them. In the late 19th century, Alexander Miles invented automatic elevator doors; Granville T. Woods developed key electrical railway technologies; their innovations still structure contemporary mobility.

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But on the African continent, the colonial period opened a tragic new chapter. Slavery was followed by forced labor. Colonial roads killed: nearly 100,000 African workers died on the Congo–Ocean railway project, and ports such as Abidjan—dug by hand—were lethal work sites. These infrastructures were not built for the people but for extraction: to link a mine to a port and transport stolen wealth to Europe.

After independence, many of these logics persisted: insufficient or deteriorated road networks marked by high mortality from car and motorcycle accidents; weak development of river and rail transport; limited and expensive air connections between African countries; and the near-complete absence of direct links between Africa and its Diaspora—so much so that one often has to travel through Europe or the United States to connect two African or Diaspora countries, even more so to connect Africa to its Diaspora. Pan-Africanism still suffers today from the absence of a genuine Pan-African mobility network.

But change is underway. Regular connections have emerged between Benin, Martinique and Brazil; others between Jamaica and Ghana. Plans for Pan-African cruises are taking shape. The State of the African Diaspora is actively contributing to these efforts. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), along with equivalent agreements within CARICOM, lays the foundations of a common logistical market, preparing the advent of a truly interconnected world.

Finally, the peoples of Africa and its Diaspora are already participating in space exploration. Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan and Mary Jackson—long rendered invisible—were essential to NASA’s programs, as revealed by the film *Hidden Figures*. Cheick Modibo Diarra, former NASA official, former Prime Minister of Mali and now Minister of Science and Industry of the State of the African Diaspora, continues this legacy. The first African in space blazed the trail: Arnaldo Tamayo Méndez, a Cuban astronaut of African descent, who traveled aboard Soyuz 38 in 1980, soon followed by Guion Stewart Bluford, the first African American in space, aboard Challenger (STS-8) in 1983. Furthermore, Jean-Pascal Zadi’s film *Le Grand Déplacement*, released in 2025, which tells the story of the first African space expedition—the Black Starline—is a comedy, but certainly also a prophecy.

Thus, from caravan trails to space routes, our history is a history of mobility. This is why, for the State of the African Diaspora, transportation is not merely a technical or logistical matter: it is an eminently political and even philosophical subject. It concerns memory, reparations, development, and the future—our future together. It gives meaning to our mission: to connect peoples, reconnect destinies, heal the fractures of history, and build a Pan-African world in which movement is no longer a tool of oppression but an instrument of freedom.

## **SECTION 1 — PRINCIPLES AND DEFINITIONS**

### **Article 1 — Guiding Principles**

1. Transportation shall be recognised as a fundamental dimension of Pan-African identity, collective memory, and political action.
2. Mobility shall be considered a principle for all citizens of Africa and its Diaspora, and a tool for development, freedom, reconnection and economic empowerment.
3. The State of the African Diaspora (SOAD) affirms that mobility can no longer be an instrument of oppression, exploitation or exclusion, but must be a pathway toward unity, justice and progress.
4. All public transport policies adopted under this Bill shall promote:
  - a. accessibility to all, including persons with disabilities ;
  - b. safety and dignity;
  - c. sustainability;
  - d. interoperability between African and Diaspora states;
  - e. historical justice and reparative measures.
5. SOAD affirms the principle of full inclusion and equal access for persons with disabilities, ensuring that all transport systems, infrastructures and services are designed, regulated and implemented in accordance with universal accessibility standards.
6. SOAD shall recognise and support the principles and objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and commits to aligning its transport policies with regional integration, free movement, and the strengthening of intra-African and Diaspora-African economic exchanges.
7. Implementation modalities of this law shall be defined by Executive Decree.

### **Article 2 — Definitions**

For the purposes of this Act:

1. “Pan-African Transport Network (PATN)” refers to the integrated system of land, maritime, air and space transport programmes encouraged or coordinated by SOAD.
2. “Transport Operator” means any public, private or community entity providing mobility services.
3. “Reparative Mobility” designates transport initiatives explicitly aimed at reconnecting populations separated by slavery, colonisation or forced migrations.
4. “Heritage Routes” refers to historical itineraries linked to African mobility, including trade routes, routes of resistance, routes of deportation, and routes of return.

## **SECTION 2 — ROADS, MEMORY AND REPARATION**

### **Article 3 — Memorialisation of African Routes**

1. SOAD shall identify, list and recognise Pan-African Heritage Routes, including but not limited to:
  - a. Trans-Saharan trade routes;
  - b. Swahili maritime routes;
  - c. Routes of the Middle Passage;
  - d. Maroon, Quilombo, Palenque and Underground Railroad routes;
  - e. Routes of Spices and Perfumes;
  - f. Routes of return (Garveyite and others).
2. These routes shall be inscribed in the Pan-African Heritage Register, maintained by the Ministry of Historical Legacy. A programme of digital routes shall also be built to promote and memorialise all these historic routes, in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism.

### **Article 4 — Reparative Mobility Initiatives**

1. SOAD shall support programmes of symbolic and material reparation through mobility, including:
  - a. commemorative voyages;
  - b. memory cruises;
  - c. educational travel for youth of Africa and its Diaspora;
  - d. pilgrimages to historical sites related to slavery and resistance.
2. SOAD shall promote partnerships with African states, Caribbean states, Latin America, and other Diaspora nations or organisations to organise direct travel routes serving these reparative purposes.

## **SECTION 3 — TRANSPORT TITLES**

### **Article 5 — Pan-African Travel Documents**

1. SOAD shall establish the Pan-African Mobility Card (PAMC), granting holders access to preferential travel conditions on partner networks.
2. A Pan-African Passport shall be issued to SOAD citizens to facilitate identification and mobility.
3. Countries or regions partnering with SOAD shall facilitate circulation of passengers and goods transported by SOAD operators.
4. SOAD shall create a travel agency, which shall provide transport documents, allowing any authorised person to access means of transport operated or recognised by SOAD.
5. These transport documents certify the right to mobility, a constitutive element of diasporic citizenship and an essential instrument of connection between the peoples of Africa and the Diaspora.

6. The transport documents are personal, non-transferable, and must be presented upon request by the competent authorities.
7. All transport documents shall be digitised within a single suitable platform.
8. Partner states shall be encouraged to integrate this platform into their control systems to facilitate air, maritime and road interconnections.
9. Should a unified African–Diaspora passport be approved in the future, SOAD may adopt such passport in accordance with the relevant agreements.

#### **Article 6 — Tariffs**

1. Transport operators accredited within the PATN shall be encouraged to offer reduced fares:
  - a. for citizens of SOAD;
  - b. for students and elders.
2. Any goods or merchandise not produced by SOAD entering its territory shall be taxed according to the customs tariff of SOAD.

#### **Article 7 — Accreditation**

1. SOAD shall accredit partners with a Certificate of Pan-African Transport Compliance (CPATC) to any operator meeting standards of safety, inclusion, environmental responsibility and linguistic accessibility (including African languages). This CPATC shall be compulsory for any entity wishing to operate under SOAD’s jurisdiction.
2. Under SOAD’s jurisdiction, regular audits shall be conducted, whether scheduled or unannounced, to verify the continued compliance with the standards that justified the issuance of the CPATC. In cases of non-compliance, the concerned operator shall be granted a period of time to correct the identified shortcomings. Failing such corrections, the CPATC may be suspended or revoked, resulting in a temporary or permanent prohibition from operating under SOAD’s jurisdiction.

### **SECTION 4 — TRANSPORT OF PERSONS, ANIMALS AND GOODS**

#### **Article 8 — General Rules**

1. Persons, animals and goods shall be transported under conditions that respect safety, dignity, hygiene and environmental sustainability.
2. SOAD shall encourage multimodal transport solutions linking road, rail, maritime and air systems.

#### **Article 9 — Free Circulation of People and Essential Goods**

1. Goods essential to education, culture, health and food security shall benefit from preferential circulation regimes within the PATN.
2. Transport policies shall prioritise African and Diaspora businesses, cooperatives and community enterprises.

3. SOAD citizens shall have the right to circulate freely between the embassies of SOAD, subject to the limitations and conditions provided for by treaties and by the provisions adopted for their application.
4. All goods and merchandise of SOAD shall have the right to circulate freely between the embassies of SOAD subject to the limitations and conditions provided for by treaties and by the provisions adopted for their application.
5. SOAD shall encourage the means of transport between Kingdoms and Queendoms in Africa.
6. Each embassy of SOAD shall be equipped with an independent customs service to regulate the circulation of persons, goods and merchandise.

## **SECTION 5 — AGREEMENTS WITH PARTNER STATES**

### **Article 10 — Obligations of Partner States**

1. Partner States shall guarantee the security and safe operation of:
  - Routes used by citizens of SOAD;
  - Air, maritime, road and rail fleets of SOAD;
  - Infrastructure made available to SOAD operations, including ports, airports, roads and railways;
  - Access points and operational zones used by the Pan-African fleet.
2. Partner States shall ensure secure and facilitated access to national infrastructure for SOAD fleets, including the authorisation of landing, docking, passage or parking.
3. Partner States shall participate in joint programmes of maintenance, training, safety enhancement and modernisation of infrastructure and transport systems used by SOAD.
4. Partner States shall remove or reduce administrative, fiscal or operational obstacles that hinder the mobility of SOAD citizens or the functioning of SOAD fleets.
5. Partner States shall cooperate in the sharing of information necessary to identify, prevent and mitigate risks affecting the security of transport operations.
6. These obligations shall be carried out in accordance with applicable treaties, national legislation and international norms.
7. The State of the African Diaspora shall not be held responsible for accidents resulting from deficiencies inherent to the existing infrastructure or regulatory frameworks of Partner States.

### **Article 11 — Pan-African Corridors**

Pan-African Corridors shall be established, enabling:

- Priority circulation of SOAD citizens, goods and merchandise in partner countries, under established cooperation agreements;

- Reduction of border formalities and administrative delays;
- Increased protection for diplomatic, logistical and humanitarian operations.

### **Article 12 — Transport Compliance**

SOAD fleets shall comply with:

1. Safety standards established by SOAD;
2. Security controls imposed by partner States, where these do not infringe the sovereignty of SOAD embassies and territories.

### **Article 13 — Security Audits**

Infrastructure used by SOAD shall be subject to regular audits carried out:

1. By the Autonomous Transport Security Service;
2. In cooperation with partner-country authorities; to ensure maintenance of security standards in compliance with international obligations.

### **Article 14 — Training of Personnel**

All persons responsible for security or operation of diplomatic transport shall receive certified training consistent with:

- International norms;
- Standards established by SOAD;
- Protection needs of African and diasporic populations.

### **Article 15 — Maintenance and Technical Management**

SOAD shall ensure:

- Regular maintenance of infrastructure and the Pan-African fleet;
- Technical supervision of equipment;
- Risk monitoring and corrective actions;
- Technological innovation in aeronautic, maritime, road, rail and digital fields.

## **SECTION 6 — LAND TRANSPORT**

### **Article 16 — Roads**

1. SOAD shall promote the development of safe, modern and interconnected road networks across African and Diaspora states.

2. Where SOAD is involved in road infrastructure, safety mechanisms shall specifically address motorcycle, pedal bikes, and minibus transport, which contribute to high mortality rates in many countries of Africa.

#### **Article 17 — Rail**

1. Where necessary, SOAD shall seek to partner and develop the expansion of African rail networks, prioritising:
  - a. cross-border and inter-regional connections;
  - b. electric and low-carbon technologies;
  - c. access to isolated or underserved regions.
2. A Pan-African Railway Board shall be created to coordinate efforts.

#### **Article 18 — Urban Transport**

1. Where necessary, SOAD shall seek to partner and develop urban sustainable mobility models such as:
  - a. electric buses;
  - b. tram systems;
  - c. bicycle lanes, etc;
2. Affordable urban mobility shall be a priority.

### **SECTION 7 — MARITIME TRANSPORT**

#### **Article 19 — Pan-African Maritime Corridors**

1. Where necessary, SOAD shall promote direct and regular maritime lines between Africa and Diaspora regions.
2. Special emphasis shall be placed on heritage voyages and Pan-African cultural cruises.

#### **Article 20 — Safety and Environmental Protection**

1. Maritime operators must be compliant with international safety standards.
2. SOAD promotes clean-port initiatives and reduced-emission ship fleets.

### **SECTION 8 — AIR AND SPACE TRANSPORT**

#### **Article 21 — Air Transport**

1. SOAD shall support the creation of direct air companies linking African and Diaspora cities.
2. SOAD shall support the creation of airports, maintenance systems, aviation schools and aviation cities.
3. Efforts shall be made to reduce the cost of intra-African and Africa–Diaspora flights.
4. SOAD encourages the creation of a unified African Sky.

5. Under standard aviation agreements, SOAD partner States shall allow SOAD to operate its own air fleet within host-country airports.

#### **Article 22 — Aerospace Development**

1. SOAD shall support Pan-African participation in space exploration.
2. A Pan-African Space Programme shall be created, pursuing:
  - a. satellite and rocket development;
  - b. youth education in aerospace sciences;
  - c. partnerships with African and Diaspora space agencies;
  - d. cultural projects celebrating Pan-African contributions to space history.
3. A space city shall be built to support this initiative, in relation with AU Space institutions and international partners.

#### **Article 23 — Future Routes**

1. In line with the legacy of African navigators and explorers, SOAD affirms that future mobility—including space travel—shall be open, inclusive and oriented toward peace.
2. SOAD shall promote technological innovation, training and investment enabling people of Africa and the Diaspora to participate fully in next-generation transport systems.