

AFRICAN AEROSPACE

ISSUE 2, VOLUME 13:
APRIL – JUNE
2025

www.timesaerospace.aero

THE MAGAZINE FOR AEROSPACE PROFESSIONALS IN AFRICA

SINGLE MINDED

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Published by

AVIATION WEEK
NETWORK

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240 Blackfriars Road
London
SE1 8BF, UK
+44 207 921 5000

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www.timesaerospace.aero

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IMAGE: AFCAC

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GOLDEN DAYS STILL TO COME?

Milestones always give us an opportunity to pause and reflect on how did we get here? – and what are we doing next?

This issue of *African Aerospace* is a milestone moment for us. It is the 50th issue of the publication – and when you look around at the publications in our industry and our region – to have survived has been an achievement.

I took the opportunity to look back at our very first issue where we looked at the great opportunities that lay ahead over the next decade for African aviation.

Many of those are the same that we have today. The potential of the African continent is immense, we all know that. And in that first issue in 2013 we recognised that air travel would increase – but questioned whether that growth would find its way to the African aerospace industry or continue to be dominated from outside.

One of my favourite commentators, Sean Mendes, summed this up nicely when he wrote recently in *VoyagesAfric* travel magazine: “African aviation’s 2024 report card reads like a gifted student with a chronic habit of forgetting to do their homework. Its aviation infrastructure remains held together by duct tape, prayers, and the occasional fallout from outrage after a particularly egregious situation.”

Mendes’ experience in airlines on conference stages means he has first-hand experience of the frustration that dogs our industry in Africa.

The problems that we saw in January 2013 are still there – but to be fair, there are now good examples of progress. A few more countries are relaxing border restrictions for intra-

African travel; more hopeful airline projects have started with a handful of aircraft and focusing on routes within the continent.

At the same time newer aircraft have joined the fleets of some of the flag carriers and taken up the challenge to connect with the favourites, like Dubai, London, Paris and the US.

□□□□□

But issues like access to capital still remains. Ridiculous taxation and government interference continue to hinder affordability for the airlines – no surprise that while other airlines in the wider Europe MENA and South Asia regions are witnessing load factors in the 90 per cent mark, African airlines are in the lower 70 per cent.

People want to fly, but paying excess airport charges, excess taxes on fuel, higher maintenance costs and other factors that affect the efficient running of an airline, means affordability is a real issue.

Over our 50 issues we have recorded significant progress from the professional associations such as AFRAA who along with AFCAC, IATA, AFBAA, ACI and AASA have all pushed harder for change and brought greater awareness.

African Aerospace continues to record and comment on the changes and clings on to a belief that African aviation will soon break down the barriers and have its day.

Alan Peaford, Editor-in-chief



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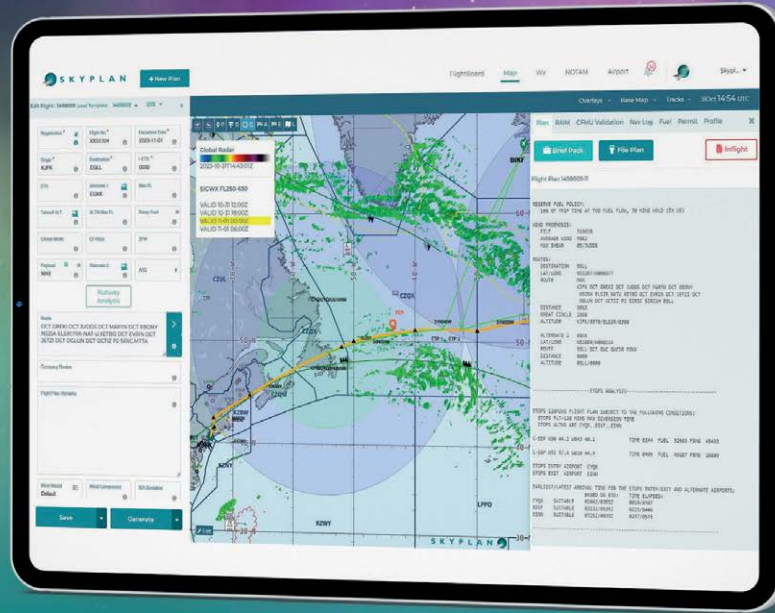
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Artist rendering of planned Mega Airport
City in Bishoftu, Ethiopia.

IMAGE: ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES



ETHIOPIAN TO BUILD \$7.8 BILLION MEGA AIRPORT

Ethiopian Airlines has signed an agreement with the African Development Bank (AfDB) to develop Africa's largest airport – the Bishoftu International Airport in Ethiopia. The project, worth \$7.8 billion, aims to dramatically scale up Ethiopia's aviation capacity, to handle 60 million passengers annually by 2040, up from the current 17 million.

The landmark MoU was signed between Mesfin Tasew, CEO of Ethiopian Airlines Group, and Nnenna Nwabufu,

vice president for regional development, integration, and strategy at AfDB.

Ethiopian Airlines selected Bishoftu because of its elevation; at about 1,900 metres above sea level it is considerably lower than Addis Ababa at 2,400 metres. This would bring the advantage of improved fuel efficiency for flights in comparison with Ethiopia's existing main airport, Addis Ababa Bole International Airport.

Tourism on the up

According to a report by the United Nations' Tourism (UNWTO), Africa welcomed approximately 74 million visitors last year, surpassing the figures from the previous year.

The continent saw an increase in tourist arrivals from both international visitors and those travelling within the continent. This makes Africa the second fastest-growing tourist destination globally, following the Middle East.

Countries in North Africa experienced a significant increase in international arrivals compared with the last five years.

Morocco and Egypt emerged as the primary

tourist destinations in Africa, while Kenya and Tanzania saw an increase in safari holidays.

Additionally, Cape Town in South Africa, Mauritius, Namibia, Zambia, Rwanda, and Botswana also saw a rise in visitors.

Fleet expansion

Kenya Airways' has expanded its fleet by acquiring a Boeing 737-800 from Dubai Aerospace Enterprise.

Allan Kilavuka, Kenya Airways Group managing director and CEO, said: "This new aircraft is testament to our continued growth and confidence in the future of African aviation, it marks a pivotal moment in our fleet expansion journey.

"It will increase our seat capacity and is a demonstration of our ability to adapt and grow in a challenging operating environment, even as the global aviation industry faces challenges in aircraft availability."

Falcon delivery

Morocco's Sarah Airways took delivery of its first Falcon 900EX aircraft from Dassault Aviation in February. The Falcon 900EX is configured to seat up to 14 passengers.

Sarah Airways specialises in VIP private transport and medical evacuation. Its fleet also includes a Falcon 100, a Citation III, a Citation VII, and a Hawker 900XP.

La Réunion seeks new unions

Reunion Roland Garros airport is looking to new routes in India and East Africa as it seeks to reach its target of three million passengers by 2030.

"We feel India is a good potential market and we would like to add another hub to improve our connectivity into Africa," said Karine Duclos (pictured), marketing & communications director at Reunion Roland Garros.

At present, the only route from La Réunion to Africa is a twice-weekly Air Austral service to Johannesburg.

In 2024 the airport handled 2.7 million passengers with some 60% of the traffic coming from the four carriers operating up to eight daily flights to French cities while there are strong traffic flows to nearby Mauritius and other Indian Ocean countries.

"It is great that we have a strong backbone with the French market, and this recovered fast after Covid because La Réunion was seen as a safe destination. But we also want to diversify and promote the huge tourism potential of our island to attract more international airlines," said Duclos.

One recent success is the growth of Air Austral's route from La Réunion to Bangkok and the onward connections to south-east Asia that service offers. Air Austral carried 74,000 passengers on the route last year a hike of 45% compared to 2023.



IMAGE: MARK PILLING



One of the first Apache attack helicopters arrives as Salé for the RMAF.

IMAGE: BOEING

First Apache batch for Morocco arrives in country

The \$440 million order for 24 of the type was made in June 2020 along with an option to acquire 12 more. Boeing began production in November 2023. The deal also includes 551 Hellfire air-to-surface missiles, 200 AIM-92H Stinger air-to-air missiles, and 558 advanced precision kill weapon system precision-guided rocket kits.

GE Aviation is supplying 48 T700-701D turboshaft engines and spare parts for the new fleet. Longbow, the joint venture between Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, is supplying AN/APG-78 Longbow radars.

"This is another step forward in our long

partnership with the kingdom of Morocco," said Jeff Shockey, Boeing Defense vice president, global sales and marketing.

"Worldwide demand for the Apache is growing and we are proud to provide this best-in-class capability to Morocco."

46 die in Sudan crash

At least 46 people were killed, and 10 others were injured in February after a Sudanese military plane crashed while attempting to take off.

The aircraft, a Russian-built Antonov An-26, crashed as it took off from Wadi Sayidna Air Base in Northeast Sudan on a flight to an air base near Port Sudan on the Red Sea.

The aircraft was carrying senior military personnel. It was reported that the crash most likely occurred due to technical reasons.

AMPS switches on

BIRD Aerosystems has secured a contract to supply its airborne missile protection system (AMPS) to an additional African Air Force.

The contract includes the delivery of a comprehensive self-protection suite for



IMAGE: ROYAL AIR MAROC

Morocco's 'Airports 2030 Strategy' revealed

IATA has welcomed Morocco's 'Airports 2030 Strategy' aimed at modernising airport infrastructure.

Aviation is a key pillar of Morocco's economy. In 2023, aviation (including aviation-related tourism) supported 856,000 jobs and contributed 7.9 per cent (\$11.2bn) to the Moroccan economy. Additionally, 93 per cent of passengers departing Morocco airports (11.7 million) were bound for international destinations. The country also handled some 77,900 tonnes of air cargo.

"Given the critical and growing importance of aviation to Morocco's economy, the launch of the

'Airports 2030 Strategy' will have a far-reaching and positive impact on Morocco's economic and social development.

"Aviation contributes 7.9 per cent to Morocco's economy and has grown by 68.1 per cent over the past decade. A comprehensive strategy on airport infrastructure investment will help secure future growth. Airlines are partners in this growth, and it is critical that they are broadly engaged in realising the strategy with a sharp focus on cost-efficiency," said Kamil Al-Awadhi, IATA regional vice president for Africa and the Middle East.

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Mi-17/8 and Mi-35 helicopters, ensuring enhanced survivability against missile threats.

The AMPS also features the self-protection radar

electro-optic system (SPREOS) directed infrared countermeasures (DIRCM).

As part of the contract, BIRD Aerosystems will also provide comprehensive

training for pilots and maintenance crews, ensuring operational proficiency and long-term system sustainability.

XEJet milestone

Zela Aviation has entered a strategic partnership with Nigerian airline XEJet, having been mandated to promote the availability of its Embraer E145 aircraft for ACMI lease.

Sukhjinder Mann, CEO of Zela, said: "Putting our aircraft for lease on the international market is a major milestone for XEJet as it signifies the growth of XEJet and demonstrates the diversification of our business model.

"We operate and run a number of airlines and our ACMI business is also growing nicely.

"We are pleased to partner with Zela Aviation due to their international network of airline clients and operators.

"We believe in and are committed to this partnership."



The Leonardo AW169 light-intermediate helicopter developed by Leonardo is the most modern and advanced aircraft in its category, equipped with state-of-the-art onboard technologies designed to the latest FAR/JAR/EASA requirements and those standards of homeland security and government users. The platform features outstanding power, agility, and maneuverability, which provides excellent handling characteristics in a wide range of operating conditions, including hot and high. The 4th generation main rotor blades allow the AW169 to arrive on scene with a reduced noise signature, increasing operational effectiveness.

The unique transmission design provides power to hydraulic, electrical, and air conditioning systems with the rotors stopped (APU mode), optimizing response time and availability.

The cabin is the most spacious in its class and features a constant height cross section for rapid reconfiguration and ease of access. It is optimized for rapid reconfiguration, allowing it to adapt seamlessly to diverse law enforcement missions. It can accommodate up to 10 officers, a specialized mission console that integrates data from a wide array or can be configured to hold two stretchers. With wide 1.6-meter doors, the AW169 enables efficient fast-roping,

rappelling, and hoisting operations, providing tactical versatility and enhanced response capabilities in high-stakes scenarios.



Pilots benefit from a latest-generation, open-architecture avionics suite, including a fully digital glass cockpit with touch screen functionalities, and unprecedented external visibility, providing advanced tactical and situational awareness.

As the only helicopter in its class to offer a choice of skid or retractable/fixed wheeled undercarriage, the AW169 is ideally suited to the needs of airborne law enforcement. The AW169 offers exceptional multi-role capability and can be equipped with a variety of role equipment to perform in the most demanding environments. These include weather and search radar, rappelling kit, rescue hoist, search light, cargo hook, electro-optics, mission console,

tactical comms among others.

The AW169 is designed with a comprehensive syllabus of digital support and training capabilities to allow best aircraft and fleet



management, maintenance planning, safety and reduced operating costs. Customers worldwide from over 30 countries have placed orders for over 330 AW169 helicopters to date, including military and law enforcement/public service operators, to carry out various missions, including utility, surveillance, special operations, maritime patrol, land reconnaissance, training, rescue, and firefighting.



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Airbus signs 7-year maintenance deal

Airbus has signed a seven-year flight hour services (FHS) contract with Ethiopian Airlines for the comprehensive maintenance of its fleet of 24 Airbus A350 aircraft, including both the A350-900 and A350-1000 models.

The agreement will provide Ethiopian Airlines with dedicated on-site stock in Addis-Abeba, access to Airbus material pools worldwide, as well as repair and engineering support for a wide range of critical rotatable parts.

Retta Melaku, director engine maintenance at Ethiopian Airlines, said: "Partnering long-term with Airbus through this FHS agreement will help us optimise operations, reduce maintenance-related delays, and ensure our passengers continue to experience the best in safety, comfort, and service."

Connecting the world

Connections between the world and Nigeria have been enhanced by a new interline agreement between Emirates and West Africa's largest airline, Air Peace.

Air Peace, COO, Oluwatoyin Olajide, said: "This collaboration not only expands Air Peace's international reach, but also offers Nigerians arriving from Dubai seamless access to key domestic destinations."

Exploring Porto

Ethiopian Airlines launched a new passenger flight service to Porto, Portugal, effective July 2, 2025.

The new flight will operate four times a week with the B787 Dreamliner and will include a single stop via Madrid, Spain.

Mesfin Tasew, Group chief executive officer of Ethiopian Airlines, said:



IMAGE: EMIRATES AIRLINES

Emirates supports early education in Ethiopia

Emirates has donated essential supplies and limited-edition, handcrafted backpacks from its 'Aircraft KIDS by Emirates' collection to two non-profit organisations in Ethiopia.

Roots Ethiopia and Brave Hearts Ethiopia serve communities by creating a nurturing and inspirational space, for financially-disadvantaged youths to continue their education. With a longstanding legacy of supporting youth, and a particular focus on education, Emirates aims to support both organisations' students with their schooling by providing practical, stylish backpacks and stationery supplies.

Manoj Nair, country manager for Ethiopia, Emirates, said: "Education has the power to not only change the lives of individuals, but of society at large, by equipping the next generation with the essential tools to build a better future."

"We wanted to start by providing the students at Roots and Brave Hearts with the supplies and resources to support on their journey, along with a little piece of Emirates' history, in the form of upcycled backpacks. Since our first flight in 2006, we have been committed to Ethiopia, scaling our operations and enriching the local communities too."

"This new route underscores our commitment to providing our passengers with more travel options and seamless connectivity."

ACSA awards

Two of the Airports Company South Africa (ACSA) received recognition at the 2024 Airport Service Quality (ASQ) Experience Awards, presented by Airports Council International (ACI) World.

Bram Fischer International Airport and George Airport both placed first in the Best Airports by Size and Region category. Both Bram Fischer and George Airports are award winners for airports with under two million passengers per year in Africa. Additionally, George Airport also won a Special Category Award for Easiest Airport Journey in Africa.

Uganda Airlines to launch UK services

Uganda Airlines is preparing to launch direct flights between Entebbe International Airport and London Gatwick Airport.

The inaugural flight is set for 18 May 2025 and will use the carrier's latest Airbus A330-300neo aircraft.

The decision to open the new route follows extensive discussions between Uganda Airlines officials and UK aviation authorities.

Uganda Airlines CEO Jenifer Bamuturaki (right) led talks aimed at strengthening business connections, promoting tourism, and connecting Uganda and the UK.

Bamuturaki said: "I'm elated and excited to announce the dates for the long-awaited direct flights to London by Uganda Airlines. This route marks the end of our establishment phase and sets us on a course for long-term growth and expansion."

"It gives me great pleasure that we celebrate our fifth year with this amazing milestone."

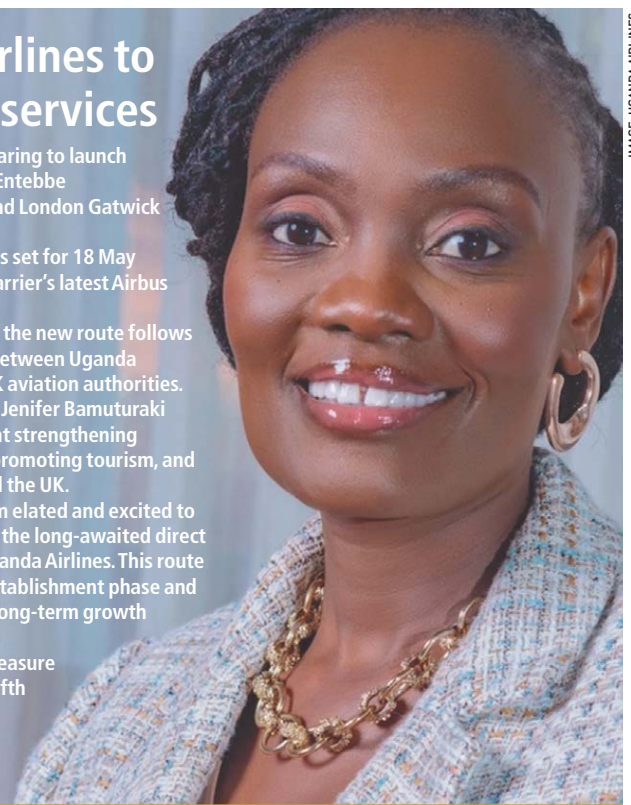


IMAGE: UGANDA AIRLINES

Embraer - Airlink parts-nership

Embraer and Airlink signed a spare parts inventory support agreement in February covering the carrier's all-Embraer fleet of 68 aircraft.

The agreement will see Airlink become the first African customer for the customised Embraer collaborative inventory planning management system, which will optimise its inventory levels and reduce its operational costs for its fleet of ERJ and E-Jets.

"Impeccable product support is an imperative to continuously deliver safe and reliable service excellence, which is an Airlink mantra.

"We are 'joined at the hip' with Embraer, and this ECIP speaks volumes to mutual commitment to optimising the operational and economic performance of our fleet," said Rodger Foster, Airlink CEO.

Airlink award

Airlink has received the Department of International Relations & Cooperation's 2025 Ubuntu Economic Diplomacy Award for a South African business operating primarily in Africa.

The honour was awarded to Airlink in recognition of its contribution to South Africa's reputation as an



RAM and Vivo Energy launch first Morocco-Europe flight with SAF

Vivo Energy Morocco and Royal Air Maroc (RAM) have launched the first flight connecting Morocco and Europe with sustainable fuel.

Royal Air Maroc operated its second flight using SAF on February 20, and for the first time to Europe, between Marrakech and Paris, marking a historic first for Paris-Orly Airport.

Powered 40 per cent by sustainable fuel, this flight significantly reduces CO2 emissions.

The two partners said in a joint statement: "This initiative

highlights the commitment of both companies to promoting more sustainable aviation in Morocco," the statement explained, noting that the launch is also with the aim of contributing to responsible tourism as the North African kingdom becomes a preferred tourist destination in Africa.'

Matthias de Laminat, managing director of Vivo Energy Morocco, added: "This first delivery represents a "major step in our commitment to decarbonising the aviation sector."

ideal destination to conduct business and to South Africa's socio-economic goals, including job creation, trade facilitation and attracting investment.

SalamAir service

Omani carrier SalamAir is further expanding its presence in East Africa with the launch of services between Muscat and Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi.

Adrian Hamilton-

Manns, CEO of SalamAir, said: "Nairobi is a dynamic city with significant business potential and rich tourism offerings, and we are pleased to provide our passengers with an affordable and convenient travel option. The route also opens seamless connections from Nairobi to the GCC and the Indian subcontinent."

Simaero switch

Simaero has announced the relocation of a modern

Embraer E190 full-flight simulator from the China Southern Airlines training centre to its Johannesburg facility.

The simulator will be certified by the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) and is expected to be ready for training in the second half of 2025.

The integration of the E190 simulator aligns with the evolving needs of Simaero's clients, many of whom are transitioning

from the Embraer ERJ 145 to the more modern E190 aircraft. African carriers are increasingly switching their ERJ 145 fleets with the larger, more fuel-efficient E190 E-Series jets, while newer start-up airlines are opting for this model due to its extended range and ETOPS capabilities.

This growing demand for the E-Series jet has created a pressing need for high-quality simulator training in Africa.

Ethiopian Airlines and Etihad launch strategic joint venture

Etihad Airways and Ethiopian Airways have joined forces in a joint venture that will transform connectivity between Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. This strategic partnership also includes a codeshare arrangement, unlocking greater travel opportunities for passengers across both networks.

As part of this collaboration, the airlines are launching new flights between Abu Dhabi and Addis Ababa.

Ethiopian Airlines will commence services from Addis Ababa Bole International Airport to Abu Dhabi International Airport on July 15, while Etihad Airways will introduce daily flights to Addis Ababa starting on October 1.





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Following her re-election for a second term as the secretary general of the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), Adefunke Adeyemi discusses the commission's work, and especially the slow progress towards a single African market, with Mark Pilling.

MARATHON WOMAN

People think about SAATM [Single African Air Transport Market] and the liberalisation agenda of Africa as a big bang, that one day we're just going to wake up and everything is going to be fixed and the whole continent is going to be connected overnight.

"But it's not like the big bang theory," said Adefunke Adeyemi, AFCAC secretary general speaking about the creation of a liberalised air transport market across the continent's 55 states.

She would love nothing better than the swish of a magic wand to usher SAATM in, but political and operational realities in Africa means it is a marathon not a sprint to get SAATM over the line. "It is all of those little steps that are being taken that contribute towards its achievement," she explained.

Adeyemi was elected to the post of secretary general in September 2022 on a ticket to bring fresh impetus to AFCAC and SAATM. How does she judge the progress being made by her team?

"We like to think that we're making progress," she asserted. "Number one, we have facilitated an increase in connectivity supported through the different interventions. There have been 97 new routes started over the past two years, 18 of them being fifth freedom routes.

"We have supported the regulatory environment through a YD [Yamassoukro Decision] compliant air service agreement template and guidelines for granting market access between countries. We're supporting through guidelines on economic regulation; we're supporting through engagements with our regional economic communities. We're supporting through reducing the non-physical barriers and mediating market access issues between states and with industry."

The key word here is support, or facilitation, because AFCAC is the African Union's specialised agency for all civil aviation matters on the African continent and the executing agency of the Yamassoukro Decision (YD) and SAATM and is not a civil aviation authority in its own right.

The YD is a declaration made in 1988 to liberalise Africa's air transport market. However, for years it was not much more than that – a declaration.

The African Union launched SAATM in 2018 as a flagship project of its 'Agenda 2063' to create a single unified air transport market in Africa to advance the liberalisation of civil aviation in Africa under the

YD and to act as an impetus to the continent's economic integration agenda.

However, it is a slow process and Adeyemi, strongly backed by African governments to win the re-election to the AFCAC post, has the energy and experience to get it moving.

DEFINING A STRATEGY

Adeyemi's political sensibilities means she does not criticise her predecessors as she took the reins at AFCAC. However, there was clearly a need for refocus and reset to "ensure that we are able to fulfil our mandate".

"In year one it was important to take a strategic approach, to build on the shoulders of those who had come before me, both at SG and at Bureau level, to build a strong institution, build a strong team, create strong core initiatives, as well as to build good visibility and a good brand and reputation for AFCAC," she said.

The AFCAC Commission went on an all-important retreat in early 2023 to thrash out the plan. "We looked at our strategic priorities and identified them with clear, measurable targets on what we wanted to achieve and what we wanted to deliver," she explained. This process has been repeated in 2024 and with the new Bureau in 2025.

While this interview focuses on the SAATM priorities, AFCAC's mandate reaches across Safety, Security, Infrastructure, Sustainability and Skills development (see box story).


These are appropriately prioritised in AFCAC's work, but the overarching importance of single African skies cannot be overstated. "I believe that SAATM, under the framework of the YD, is the single most important developmental imperative for Africa's socio-economic development," said Adeyemi.

Africa is missing the role air transportation plays in other parts of the world to create a better integrated and more prosperous continent, she said. "Aviation is seriously underdeveloped for two main reasons, one, because it is not necessarily seen as a strategic pillar of development in most countries in Africa," she said.

"Secondly, we need to transition aviation from being seen as a sort of luxury to a pillar of development for the masses."

This requires a mindset shift with aviation still viewed by many as elitist or unattainable.

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“ It is a marathon not a sprint to get SAATM over the line. It is all of those little steps that are being taken that contribute towards its achievement. ”

ADEFUNKE ADEYEMI

THE LAUNCH OF SAATM-PIP

An initiative to fast-track YD implementation through SAATM was born after the brainstorming session between Adeyemi and her team just two months after she joined in November 2022. This built on work she had helped foster during her dozen years at IATA where she was regional director, advocacy and strategic relations, Africa until she joined AFCAC.

“We talked about what can we do to transform this issue of YD and SAATM and really get some traction around it. We recognised that all 55 countries of Africa cannot go at the same time and the same pace,” she explained. “So, we said those who are ready, willing and able, let us go with that.”

The SAATM pilot implementation project was invented. “The target and the idea were about accelerating the implementation of the YD. It was not to come up with yet another acronym or another initiative. We came up with this approach where we’re looking at clusters of countries to see how connectivity can improve across different parts of Africa and to support that.”

Since the SAATM-PIP was launched, 21 countries have signed up to take part representing over 80 per cent of the market in passenger numbers. These countries are put into six clusters.

While signing up and implementation are different things, over the past two years a total of eight PIPs have taken place, said Adeyemi.

A PIP is a highly-involved affair, with the highest-level stakeholder being a country’s president. This essential buy-in brings the commitment of a huge array of stakeholders from government, with ministries responsible for transport/aviation, trade, finance, interior, tourism, and information.

A cast of operational stakeholders from airports, airlines, ANSPs, ground services, immigration, customs, revenue authorities and tourism boards had joined.

Using the example of the July 2024 PIP, held in Sierra Leone, “the focus of the SAATM-PIP Airshow is to ensure that the selected states in the cluster align their respective Air Service Agreements (ASAs) with the AFCAC YD-compliant ASA template in order to promote new Fifth Freedom traffic penetration and remove or reduce impediments to the full and sustainable implementation of SAATM.”

The PIP also promotes the use of YD/SAATM regulations and revised African Civil Aviation Policy (AFCAP) and ASA guidelines with non-African partners.

The first PIP was held in AFCAC’s home base of Senegal, with others held in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Namibia, Mozambique, Gambia and Sierra Leone. South Africa is being prepared for a PIP, while Egypt, Zambia and Uganda are on the list this year too, said Adeyemi.

SUPPORT ROLE

She is careful to explain that AFCAC’s role is one of facilitation, guidance and engagement: “We say there is a starting point and that is market access. If you are going to grant it, here is the

AFCAC DRIVES THE AGENDA

On the key safety and security front, Adeyemi’s strategy is for her team to focus on making progress with the African-Indian Ocean Cooperative Inspectorate Scheme (AFI-CIS) and Cooperative Experts (AFI-CES) scheme.

This existing scheme looks at pooling resources across Africa, leveraging those states that have expertise in terms of inspectors and experts that can support other states who do not, and includes collaboration with ICAO and others. AFCAC has prioritised revitalisation of AFI-CIS/CES.

“Through this scheme, over the past three years, we’ve supported several states, including states that went through ICAO safety and security audits and saw significant increases in their safety-security scores,” she stated.

□ □ □ □ □

Elsewhere, AFCAC undertook along with AU, ICAO and other partners, a major study in 2023 to identify infrastructure gaps across Africa. “In 2024 we published a robust report which identifies 60 gaps that can be considered bankable projects for those development partners that are interested in supporting the development and improvement of aviation infrastructure across Africa,” she said.

“With stakeholders working together, the idea in 2025 is to bring this work to life, translating the report into tangible, actionable steps,” said Adeyemi.

No strategic discussion in air transport today misses out sustainability. “We are looking at how we can support our African states working with other stakeholders in the development of sustainable aviation because Africa faces many effects of climate change,” she explained. “It is important for us to be involved in the solution, and also to benefit from whatever solutions come about.”

“AFCAC has a strategy around the development of sustainable aviation fuels and low-carbon aviation fields, which we will be concentrating on this year and beyond.

“Finally, the most important thing is, no matter what kind of strategy you have, you need to have the right people and skills to be able to discharge them and bring them to life,” she said.

“For Africa and AFCAC, we need robust capacity building to build a pipeline of African aviation professionals. This is a key priority area for us to continue to support African aviation.” ▲

template that is compliant with the YD. We have set up a dispute settlement mechanism, we have competition and consumer protection regulations which are the rules of engagement for the SAATM.”

A PIP taking place doesn’t guarantee states will open markets, but there have been tangible results with the 97 new routes, of which, importantly, 18 are Fifth Freedom ones. These are international routes where the airline adds a leg of the service to a third country.

While the aim is to foster direct services, the reality of Africa, with low traffic volumes and thin routes, means Fifth Freedoms are critical to “mop up traffic along the way and make operating routes viable,” said Adeyemi.

Following the launch of the SAATM-PIP, AFCAC began fine-tuning the approach during 2024 to increasingly involve the AU’s existing Regional Economic Communities blocs, she explained. For example, the Sierra Leone PIP invited all members of the Banjul Accord group of states, which features seven West African nations that already have a multilateral agreement between them.

AFCAC has a target to increase traffic through Fifth Freedom routes between and across the cluster of countries working through the SAATM-PIP methodology to 30 per cent by 2027, she noted. It has already risen from 15 per cent in 2019 to 21 per cent in 2024.

STATE SUPPORT

At the Aviation Africa Summit, held in Johannesburg in September 2024, Poppy Khoza, director of civil aviation, South African Civil Aviation Authority, called for AFCAC to be given the “teeth” to drive pan-African air transport liberalisation and implement SAATM.

Adeyemi welcomed such support. “We are starting to see a very important and significant change, not just in the mindset, but also in the policy and decisions that are being taken across our states.”

This accelerated following AFCAC’s strong advocacy drive across the continent in the past couple of years, delivered increased technical assistance to states and seen the launch of the SAATM-PIP process.

However, Adeyemi acknowledged that not all countries are ready for this aviation fast-track: “For many, aviation is not top of the agenda. It may be food, or education or security. For some these are the fundamentals right now. At cabinet level, aviation is not necessarily given that prioritisation that it deserves.”

For her it is critical that AFCAC creates an enabling environment for those who do want to prioritise aviation.

And with another term secured she has the backing to carry on. “We continue with our work, using our doggedness and slogging it out, continuing the advocacy and changing the mindset,” she said. “That is going to get us where we need to be.” ▲

A stylized illustration of a woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing large black sunglasses, a red earring, and a dark blue business suit with a red pocket square. She is holding a red and blue bag. The background features a large blue gear and a white background with a blue wave at the bottom.

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As Africa's aviation industry continues to evolve, TAAG Angola Airlines is positioning itself as a central player in the continent's aviation resurgence. **Yonathan Menkir Kassa** investigates.

TAAG'S HOME IMPROVEMENTS

Under the visionary leadership of its CEO, Nelson Rodrigues de Oliveira, the airline is redefining its role by investing in fleet modernisation, infrastructure, and human capital while embracing its unique geographic advantage. The CEO sheds light on TAAG's ambitious plans and the steps being taken to secure its place on the global aviation stage.

Discussing the ongoing privatization process, the CEO explained how the airline is adapting its ownership model. "We're transitioning to a shareholding structure where ownership will be divided among government-owned entities, including the ministry of finance and ENANA, which oversees airspace control," he shared. "This approach aims to enhance efficiency and performance while ensuring government oversight."

This transition aligns with Angola's broader economic diversification goals. By modernising its corporate framework, TAAG is primed to meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive global market. "It's about being leaner, more agile, and prepared to seize opportunities as they arise," he added.

Moving to the strategic advantages of Angola's geographic location, the CEO emphasised the

Nelson Rodrigues de Oliveira: TAAG is laying the groundwork for its own training academy.

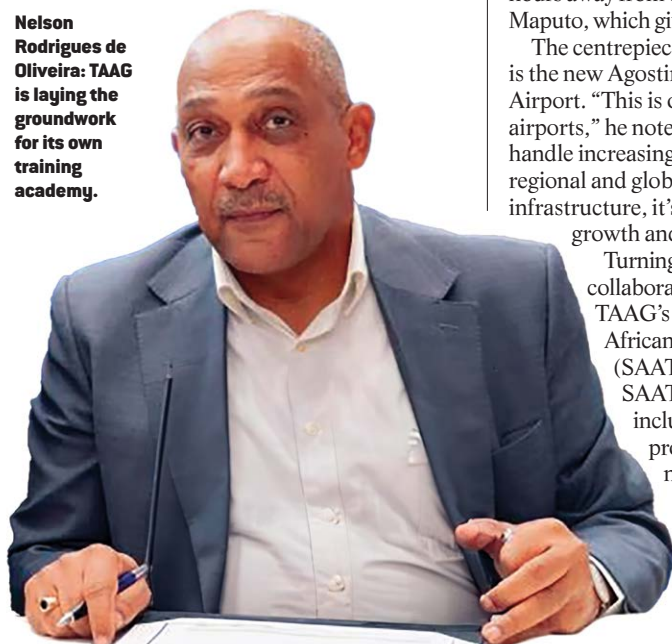


IMAGE: BOEING

Big step: TAAG's first Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner delivered in February.

IMAGE: TAAG



country's potential as a hub. "Angola's location makes it a natural connector between Africa, Europe, and the Americas," he said. With established routes to destinations like São Paulo, Havana, and Lisbon, and plans to expand to cities like Toronto, TAAG is capitalising on its position.

"We're not only focusing on transatlantic connectivity, but also strengthening regional links within Africa. For instance, we're just three hours away from cities like Johannesburg and Maputo, which gives us a strategic edge."

The centrepiece of this connectivity strategy is the new Agostinho Neto International Airport. "This is one of Africa's most modern airports," he noted proudly. "It's designed to handle increasing demand and elevate Angola's regional and global connectivity. More than just infrastructure, it's a gateway to economic growth and opportunity."

Turning to the importance of regional collaboration, the CEO discussed TAAG's commitment to the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM). "We're fully aligned with SAATM's goals," he stated. "This includes simplifying visa procedures for travellers from neighbouring countries such as Mozambique, South Africa, and Namibia. By removing barriers like restrictive air rights, we're fostering greater connectivity across Africa."

Collaboration, he stressed, is key to unlocking Africa's aviation potential. "Currently, the continent represents just two per cent of global aviation. By working together, African airlines can grow that share and make air travel more accessible and efficient," he said.

The conversation naturally shifted to the airline's focus on investing in people. Rodrigues de Oliveira spoke passionately about TAAG's plans to nurture home-grown talent. "Next year, we'll send 20 to 40 young Angolans to international training academies," he revealed. "When they return, they'll be equipped to contribute as skilled pilots and technicians."



Simultaneously, TAAG is laying the groundwork for its own training academy. "Having an in-house training organisation is critical," he emphasised. "It ensures that our workforce not only meets technical standards, but also embodies TAAG's corporate values. This consistency is vital for operational excellence and delivering a superior customer experience."

TAAG Angola Airlines has taken a major step in its fleet modernisation journey with the delivery of its first Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner in February, featuring the airline's refreshed livery.

"The delivery of the 787-9 is a pivotal step in our strategy to modernise TAAG Angola Airlines' fleet," said Rodrigues de Oliveira.

"This aircraft brings the efficiency and versatility we need to meet growing market

Air link: Centrepiece of TAAG's connectivity strategy is the new Agostinho Neto International Airport.
IMAGE: COMMONS WIKIMEDIA – YEZZISPAPI



demands, replace our ageing widebody fleet, and deliver a world-class experience to our passengers.”

The airline is also integrating Airbus A220s into its fleet to complement its Boeing 777s. “Diversifying the fleet allows us to modernise while maintaining flexibility,” the CEO explained. “For now, the Boeing 777s will act as backups until the A220s are fully operational.”

TAAG Angola Airlines has taken a major step in its fleet modernisation journey with the delivery of its first Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, featuring the airline’s refreshed livery. The advanced widebody jet, leased from AerCap, enhances TAAG’s long-haul capabilities while improving fuel efficiency and passenger comfort.

The Dreamliner’s arrival in Luanda coincides with Angola’s Liberation Day celebrations on February 4, nearly 50 years after TAAG received its first Boeing 737-200. “The delivery of the 787-9 is a pivotal step in our strategy to modernise TAAG Angola Airlines’ fleet,” said Rodrigues de Oliveira. “This airplane brings the efficiency and versatility we need to meet growing market demands, replace our ageing widebody fleet, and deliver a world-class experience to our passengers.”

This transition, while necessary, comes with challenges. “Training and maintenance adjustments are inevitable, and they incur short-term costs,” he admitted. “But these are investments in our long-term sustainability. By 2027, we aim to have a fully modernised fleet that serves both regional and international markets effectively.”

Shifting gears to tourism, the CEO highlighted TAAG’s role in promoting Angola’s attractions. “Our country offers unparalleled beauty, from pristine beaches to historic sites like Mbanza Congo, the capital of the ancient Kingdom of Kongo,” he said. Collaborating with the government and local businesses, TAAG is working to position Angola as a must-visit destination. “We’re also forming partnerships with hotels to offer discounts for our passengers, encouraging them to explore Angola’s unique offerings,” he added.



Beyond tourism, the airline is expanding its cargo operations to support Angola’s trade ambitions. “We’re developing logistics facilities at the new airport with a capacity of 150 tons,” he shared. “This infrastructure will enable exports of goods like coffee and bananas while facilitating the import of essential technologies and equipment.”

TAAG’s cargo services also extend beyond Africa, with strong links to Brazil and South Africa. “Brazil is a key trading partner, and we’re exploring ways to deepen this relationship,” he explained. “Our vision is to make Angola a logistics hub that connects regional and global markets.”

Despite its achievements, TAAG faces challenges, particularly economic volatility and high fuel costs. “Most of our expenses are in U.S. dollars, while local currencies fluctuate,” the CEO acknowledged. “This creates financial pressure, especially during economic downturns.”

Yet, the airline remains resilient. “Our five-year strategic plan focuses on operational efficiency, financial sustainability, and enhancing customer service. We’re optimising our operations to adapt to these challenges and drive growth,” he said.

Closing the interview, Rodrigues de Oliveira reflected on TAAG’s broader mission. “We want to be more than just an airline; we aim to be a source of national pride,” he stated. “Our commitment extends beyond profitability. It’s about supporting Angola’s development, fostering community growth, and creating opportunities for future generations.”

This commitment is evident in TAAG’s corporate social responsibility initiatives. The airline supports schools and community programs across Angola, providing resources like computers and educational materials. “We also assist families with autistic children by offering free tickets for medical travel,” he shared. “These efforts reflect our belief that an airline should serve the people, not just the bottom line.”

Looking ahead, TAAG is set to expand its global footprint. “We’re preparing to launch new routes to North America and strengthen our European connections,” the CEO revealed.

With new Boeing 787s arriving soon, the airline is poised to meet growing demand.

“Our ultimate goal is to connect Angola to the world and ensure that we play a central role in shaping the future of global aviation,” he concluded. ▲





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Africa's aviation industry still remains underdeveloped, with only 2.4 per cent of global passenger traffic despite housing 18 per cent of the world's population.

Highlighting the disparity, Biru stated: "Aviation in Africa is at the lowest level when compared with the global passenger traffic... There is an air traffic imbalance when compared with the global air traffic movement."

He emphasised that "developing and opening up air traffic movement is very essential for the socio, economic, and cultural growth and exchange within Africa and beyond".

Air Congo, he affirmed, is launched "with this aim of connecting Africa".

One of the most significant aspects of Air Congo's launch is its equity partnership with Ethiopian Airlines. "African airlines are highly challenged by lack of professionalism, good governance, and leadership," Biru said.

He explained that Ethiopian Airlines' involvement ensures that Air Congo "stays competitive and sustainable" by bringing "its long years of experience, expertise, and commercial and operational excellence." Without such a structure, he warned, "the fate of airlines in Africa has become a gradual failure."

Air Congo's primary focus is to improve domestic air travel within the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a country with limited infrastructure and vast geographical challenges.

Currently, African travellers often transit through distant hubs such as Johannesburg, Nairobi, or Addis Ababa to reach regional destinations. "Air connectivity within Africa is very much suppressed, and regional air movements involve transiting via long-distant cities within Africa and beyond," Biru said.

Infrastructure remains a significant challenge in the DRC, with limited land connectivity and unregulated operators. However, Biru remains optimistic: "Just like many African countries, the DRC has an infrastructure problem with limited land connectivity, airport infrastructure, and non-regulated operators."

Air Congo's presence is set to stimulate trade, tourism, and economic growth. "The DRC is twice the size of Ethiopia, with multiple provinces and major cities," Biru pointed out. "The distance between Addis Ababa and the city of Goma is equal to the distance between



Congo-connect

The launch of Air Congo marks a pivotal moment for African aviation, addressing long-standing challenges in connectivity, governance, and market sustainability.

Yonathan Menkir Kassa speaks with Air Congo CEO Mesfin Biru.

Kinshasa and the city of Goma. This shows that the DRC is a vast country blessed with natural gifts such as forest wood and minerals under the earth. The more than 110 million population of the DRC are assets to exchange cultural and artistic attributes and social engagements.

"Equity airline partnership is the best fit arrangement for airlines within Africa as establishing an airline company is a very capital-intensive business that also needs a high level of professionalism and good governance and transparency," Biru added.

Air Congo is actively integrating into the global aviation network. "Air Congo has filed to get certification and airline codes from the International Air Transport Association (IATA)," Biru revealed.

"It has already secured the three letter

designator (3LD) and also the airline telephony from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The Air Congo 3LD is 'DRC,' and the airline's telephony or call sign is 'LeoparC.' Leopard represents the DRC insignia, and the C at the end represents the Congo (DRC)."

The airline is also forging strategic partnerships. "Eventually, we will have more and more interline and code-share partnerships with many strategic partner airlines. The interline partnership and SPA agreement with Ethiopian is already signed. This makes Air Congo and Ethiopian able to exchange passengers and enables them to issue through-fare tickets between the two airlines."

He added, "For instance, a passenger travelling from Kisangani to Dubai can purchase one ticket with an itinerary Kisangani-Kinshasa-Addis Ababa-Dubai with a very competitive fare."

With its strategic vision, strong partnership, and commitment to excellence, Air Congo is poised to reshape aviation in Central Africa. "We are in the right place at the right time," Biru concluded, confident in the airline's ability to connect, empower, and transform the region. ▲

“Equity airline partnership is the best fit arrangement for airlines within Africa.”

MESFIN BIRU

Mesfin Biru: "Air connectivity within Africa is very much suppressed."
IMAGE: AIR CONGO



SOMMAIRE

AMÉLIORER LA CONNECTIVITÉ EN AFRIQUE CENTRALE

Le lancement d'Air Congo marque une étape importante dans le développement du transport aérien en Afrique notamment pour relever les défis de connectivité, de gouvernance et de viabilité du marché. Un reportage de Yonathan Menkir Kassa.

Même si l'industrie aéronautique représente seulement 2,4% du trafic mondial des passagers, le continent abrite 18% de sa population.

"Air Congo a été lancée dans le but de se connecter à L'Afrique. Le développement du transport aérien est essentiel pour la croissance et les échanges socio-économiques et culturels du continent et au-delà", affirme Mesfin Biru, directeur général de la compagnie.

L'un des fondamentaux d'Air Congo reste son partenariat avec Ethiopian Airlines. « Sa participation est une garantie pour Air Congo de rester compétitive et durable grâce à l'expérience, l'expertise et l'excellence commerciale et opérationnelle de la compagnie éthiopienne », soutient Mesfin Biru. « Sans une telle structure, le destin des compagnies aériennes en Afrique demeure incertain. »

Le premier objectif d'Air Congo est de stimuler le transport domestique en République démocratique du Congo (RDC). Les voyageurs africains transitent souvent vers d'autres aéroports comme Johannesburg, Nairobi ou Addis-Abeba.

Les infrastructures aéroportuaires restent un défi important en RDC mais Mesfin Biru reste optimiste.

« La présence d'Air Congo devrait stimuler le commerce, le tourisme et la croissance économique. La RDC est deux fois plus grande que l'Éthiopie, avec de nombreuses provinces et villes importantes. »

□□□□□

Le pays est doté de richesses naturelles (forêt, bois et les minéraux).

Air Congo compte également s'intégrer dans le réseau mondial de l'aviation. La compagnie a déposé une demande de certification et de codes aériens auprès de l'IATA. La compagnie aérienne recherche également des partenariats stratégiques. Selon Mesfin Biru, la compagnie aura « à terme des partenariats interlignes et de partages de codes avec de nombreuses compagnies aériennes. Le partenariat avec Ethiopian est déjà signé. Il permet à Air Congo et à Ethiopian d'échanger des passagers et d'émettre des billets directs entre les deux compagnies ». ▲



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SA's air pressure...

*South African airlines and the country's air traffic service have been making headlines, but not always for the right reasons. **Guy Leitch** reports.*

■ STABILITY KEY TO SAA'S FUTURE GROWTH

Since South African Airways (SAA) emerged from business rescue and resumed operations in September 2021, an ongoing constraint to SAA's recovery has been access to capital. In the short term the airline has been in the news over the contentious appointment of Professor John Lamola and the new CEO.

Lamola was initially appointed as executive chairman in 2021 and then interim SAA Group CEO in May 2022. The search for a permanent CEO produced a short list of three candidates: Allan Kilavuka, the CEO of Kenya Airways, Philip Saunders, who was SAA's chief commercial officer in 2019 and acting CEO in 2020, and Lamola, as the current incumbent.

The SAA board recommended Kilavuka – however government minister Barbara Creecy overruled the board and appointed Lamola; presumably because he is a South African and not a white male, the reasons the other two candidates were ruled out.

Opposition political parties have strongly objected to the Government overruling the SAA Board as it creates a precedent for future government intervention in the airline – and thus a return to the bad old days of SAA being used as a tool of government policy.

The ongoing constraint of the shortage of capital was to be addressed through the sale of a majority shareholding to a strategic equity partner: the Takatso Consortium. However that deal was cancelled in 2024.

In the 2022/23 financial year, SAA reported a net profit of R252 million (US\$13.8m).

Lamola said: "This marks a significant milestone for the airline, demonstrating its ability to sustain profitability in a highly-competitive and capital-intensive sector."

A critical driver of SAA's financial stability is its balance sheet, which is free from legacy debt, and a commitment to avoiding government bailouts. Lamola said: "We have a five-year plan that ensures SAA will survive on its own

operational revenues for at least the next three years."

Currently, SAA operates a fleet of 20 aircraft, predominantly narrowbody Airbus A320s on a regional and domestic network. Due to a shortage of widebody aircraft, long-haul operations remain limited to Sao Paulo and Perth.

Lamola said: "The airline's restructuring and future expansion plans align with South Africa's broader economic growth objectives, including increased connectivity, tourism, and trade facilitation."

"We are looking forward to the completion of the external audit of the business performance for financial year ended March 2024. That should give assurance that SAA is on a sustainable recovery path. As SAA charts its course for the future, its commitment to profitability, strategic expansion, and industry leadership affirms its role as a flagship carrier," Lamola said. ▲

■ FLYSAFAIR FACES 12-MONTH BATTLE TO BE COMPLIANT

FlySafair was beset by a legion of troubles over the peak festive season.

Its greatest threat was two adverse rulings by South Africa's International and Domestic Air Services Licensing Councils. These councils found that the airline did not comply with South Africa's 25-per cent limit on foreign ownership.

Airlink and Global Aviation, (which operates Lift Airline), lodged complaints regarding FlySafair's shareholding. In December, the councils found that FlySafair is 74.86 per cent owned by ASL Aviation Group, an Irish holding company.

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FlySafair first faced a challenge to its offshore shareholding when it was launched in 2014 and the airline changed its ownership to comply. Then, in 2019, it was discovered that FlySafair's parent company ASL had claimed in its annual report that it was once again a 75 per cent shareholder of the airline.

There was widespread speculation that the licencing councils may ground the airline. FlySafair initially argued that it considered itself to be



IMAGE: SAFAIR

compliant due to the trustees of the Safair Investment Trust being South African.

The airline also argued that the law was vague and it therefore needed a ruling as to what structure would be acceptable. The issue was provisionally resolved in January when the licencing councils gave FlySafair twelve months to become compliant.

Also in December, the airline faced a public relations disaster when it admitted to regularly overbooking flights. Competitor airlines were

quick to claim that they did not do 'deliberate overbooking'.

Then newspaper headlines splashed claims of a very near disaster at Durban that was covered up by the airline and glossed over by the SACAA. And if that was not enough, a self-proclaimed social media influencer started a drunken brawl with cabin crew.

The passenger videos went viral, but it must have been some consolation that this time public opinion supported the airline. ▲



John Lamola: SAA airline is operating sustainably - even if it is short of capital.

IMAGE: SAA



Stellar career: Rodger Foster. IMAGE: AIRLINK

FOSTER'S INDELIBLE LINK WITH AIRLINE HE FOUNDED

Rodger Foster, the founder of South African regional airline Airlink, announced his retirement from a stellar career of almost 33 years running the airline he created.

Foster attributes Airlink's survival to three factors: Maintaining a strong balance sheet, forging lucrative airline partnerships, and supporting staff to improve morale.

Foster is particularly proud of Airlink's investment in its balance sheet. He said the airline has been "very conservative when it comes to managing money, ensuring debt is paid back, debt covenants are not breached and having enough working capital for emergency scenarios.

"We also took a conservative approach to expanding our route network when others had been more aggressive on growth, which later came to stretch them past breaking point."

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The biggest test of Airlink's resilience was the COVID-19 pandemic, when its strong balance sheet enabled it to retain all its staff throughout the crisis. "This is testimony to our attitude to staff in terms of looking after their best interests and also up-skilling them," Foster said.

In 1997, Airlink entered a franchise with SAA which worked well for 23 years. However, in December 2019, SAA entered business rescue and failed to transfer to Airlink R890 million (US\$48.75m) of revenue for flown tickets. This prompted Airlink to terminate the franchise in early 2020. Foster said: "it was a blessing in disguise as the termination of the franchise meant that we were now free to do what we want, and to grow the business".

In asserting its independence, Airlink was rebranded, and over the past five years has cultivated more than 40 commercial airline partnerships, including 10 code shares, with carriers from all three of the global airline alliances.

In August 2024, Qatar Airways acquired a 25 per cent share in Airlink, which injected further capital into the airline.

Foster's shoes will be hard to fill. The airline's chief financial officer, de Villiers Engellbrecht, takes over as CEO from 1 April 2025.

ATNS' DEADLINE TO SOLVE STAFF CRISIS

A South African Transport Department report has found that the state-owned Air Traffic and Navigation Services (ATNS) faces critical staff shortages.

The report noted that the staff shortages required air traffic control sectors to be combined. Further, it has neglected to maintain flight procedures, of which 326 have been withdrawn by the SACAA.

There is a worldwide shortage of experienced air traffic controllers and partly due to its specific racial diversity hiring requirements, ATNS has suffered a high skills loss. As a state-owned enterprise, ATNS is expected to transform its employee racial mix.

"We are on the right track to meet the national development plan objectives as an aviation industry player," ATNS CEO Ms. Nozipho Mdawe said.

From an analysis of ATNS annual reports, the headcount of air traffic controllers declined a third, from more than 900 in 2012 to 646 in 2023. Yet during this period air travel increased by 13.2 per cent, according to IATA.

Due to the withdrawal of the 326 navigation procedures, transport minister Barbara Creecy tasked the ATNS Board to accelerate the recruitment of air traffic controllers, flight procedure designers, technical support staff, engineers and training instructors.



ATNS has suffered a high skills loss - partly due to its specific racial diversity hiring requirements.

IMAGE: ATNS

The minister has given ATNS "18 months to three years" to fully implement the recommendations related to staffing problems.

This "18 months to three years" is criticised as being too long, as ATNS has failed to honour past promises.

Aaron Munetsi, the CEO of the Airlines Association of Southern Africa, said: "ATNS failed to deliver on its assurances that the procedures would be reinstated by the summer peak travel season."

Boeing Africa's managing director Henok Teferra outlines how the manufacturer views the prospects for the continent's aviation market in this interview with **Kaleyesus Bekele**.

Step by step, growing Boeing's Africa footprint

Africa's aviation industry has immense potential, but growth depends on key reforms, said Henok Teferra, managing director for Boeing Africa.

"Full Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) implementation will enhance connectivity and reduce air fares. Fleet modernisation with fuel-efficient aircraft and investment in SAF will drive sustainability," Teferra said.

Boeing is one of the staunch advocates of SAATM seeing it as a catalyst for economic growth and regional connectivity. With 37 countries already participating, progress has been made in regulatory frameworks, safety standards, and capacity-building. However, many industry players are not happy with the slow implementation of SAATM.

"Boeing is committed to supporting the successful

implementation of SAATM through collaboration with governments, airlines, and industry stakeholders, policy engagement, capability enhancement, and technology," he said. "We take pride in our role not just as a fleet supplier, but as a critical enabler of the aviation ecosystem."

Africa's air transport market is poised for significant growth, with passenger traffic expected to rise by 6.4 per cent annually and triple by 2043. Boeing projects the need for 1,170 new aircraft over the next 20 years, with single-aisle planes making up 70 per cent of deliveries.

However, high operational costs, infrastructure gaps, and protectionist policies are some of the hurdles hampering the growth of the airline industry in Africa.

AIRCRAFT FINANCING

Access to aircraft financing remains a challenge. "Boeing is providing assistance, but still African airlines need better funding mechanisms, leasing options, and policy support to modernise fleets. Strong public-private partnerships are crucial for a competitive, unified air transport market," Teferra said. "All these growth factors will position Africa as a global aviation leader and support Agenda 2063's vision for prosperity."

Some African countries are relaunching their national carriers, and private airlines are being established. Demand for newer jetliners is surging. Unfortunately, most African carriers are under financed as they face challenges in accessing aircraft financing and African airline executives need aircraft manufacturers' intervention.

Teferra said that Boeing recognises that access to aircraft financing is a key challenge for many African carriers, particularly as they seek to modernise their fleets with newer, more fuel-efficient aircraft. "To support these airlines, Boeing offers a range of financial solutions and advisory services through Boeing customer finance, which helps customers explore and secure financing options tailored to their needs."

According to Teferra, Boeing customer finance provides guidance on risk assessment, cash flow management and

payment structuring and connects airlines with financiers such as banks, multilaterals and lessors, including the US Export-Import Bank (EXIM Bank) and Afrexim Bank, facilitating structured financing and lease options. "We also collaborate with all aircraft lessors to help secure lease agreements for African airlines," he said.

"Additionally, we advocate for improved aviation financial policies that will attract greater investment. To achieve this, we collaborate with governments, regulators, financial organisations, as well as institutions like the Airline Working Group which helps assess a country's compliance with the Cape Town Convention and provides a rating that indicates the ease of placing and repossessing aircraft in the country," he added.

Teferra pointed out the memorandum of understanding it signed with Nigeria's Ministry of Aviation and Aerospace Development in 2024 as a notable example of Boeing's commitment. The agreement is designed to enhance the country's aviation sector, including facilitating access to aircraft financing and leasing.

AFRICAN FOOTPRINT

Boeing has maintained a significant presence in Africa's aviation sector for more than 75 years, with over 60 airline customers operating approximately 500 Boeing aircraft, representing about 70 per cent of the in-service fleet across the continent, he explained.

In terms of recent developments, Ethiopian Airlines became the first African carrier to order the Boeing 777X in March 2024, with an agreement to purchase eight 777-9 passenger aircraft and options for an additional 12.

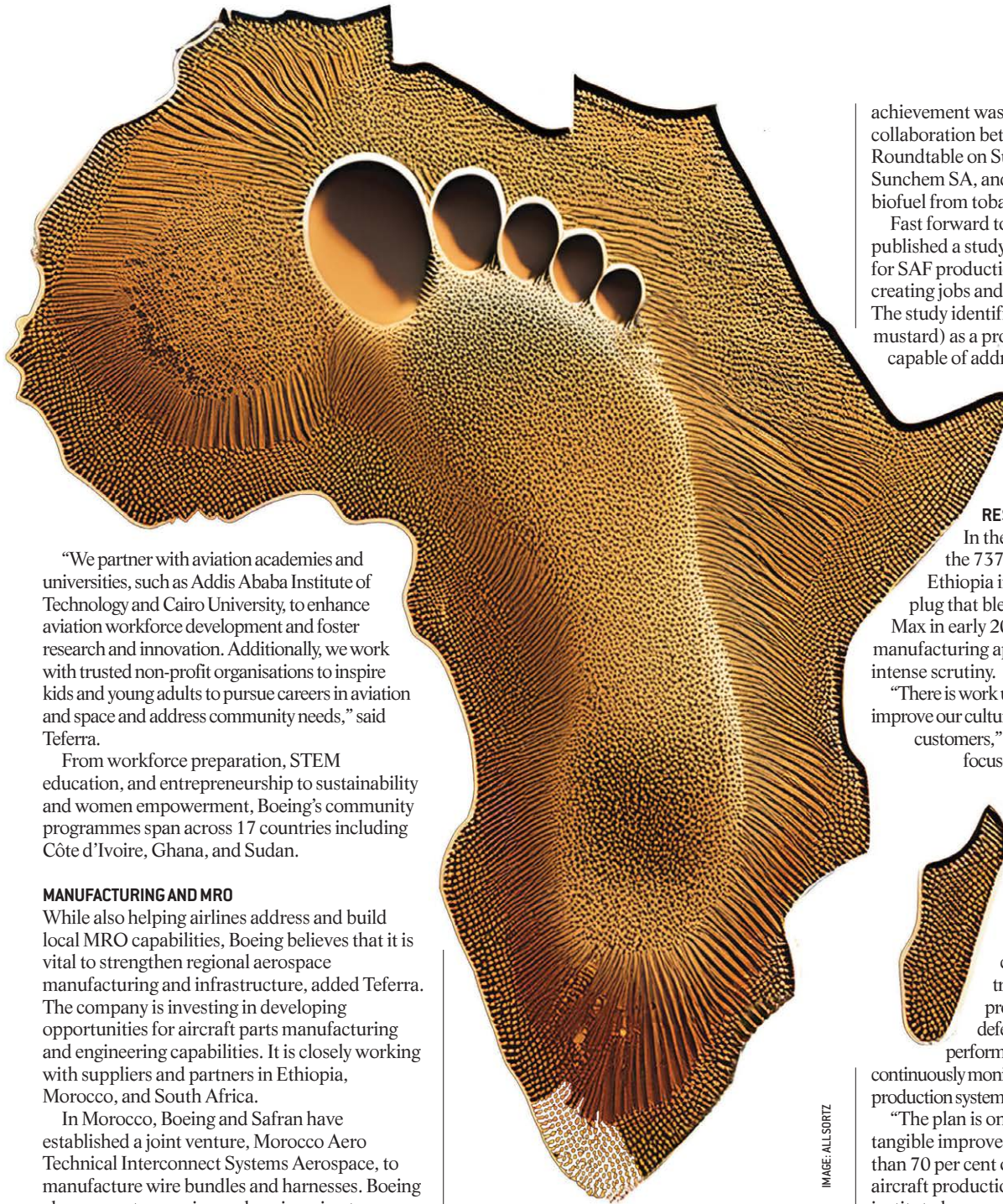
In 2024, Boeing delivered a total of seven aircraft to Africa, comprising four 737 MAX and three 787s for Air Tanzania, the Tanzanian Government, Ethiopian Airlines, and Royal Air Maroc. "At the end of January, the inaugural Boeing 787 landed in Luanda, marking a significant milestone as we delivered the first of four 787 Dreamliners to TAAG Angola Airlines," he noted.

Beyond its usual business, Boeing collaborates with African countries to foster the development aviation industry by providing support to aviation academies, MRO centres and aerospace manufacturing industries.

Henok Teferra:
Boeing's
community
programmes
span across 17
countries.

IMAGE: BOEING





“We partner with aviation academies and universities, such as Addis Ababa Institute of Technology and Cairo University, to enhance aviation workforce development and foster research and innovation. Additionally, we work with trusted non-profit organisations to inspire kids and young adults to pursue careers in aviation and space and address community needs,” said Teferra.

From workforce preparation, STEM education, and entrepreneurship to sustainability and women empowerment, Boeing’s community programmes span across 17 countries including Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, and Sudan.

MANUFACTURING AND MRO

While also helping airlines address and build local MRO capabilities, Boeing believes that it is vital to strengthen regional aerospace manufacturing and infrastructure, added Teferra. The company is investing in developing opportunities for aircraft parts manufacturing and engineering capabilities. It is closely working with suppliers and partners in Ethiopia, Morocco, and South Africa.

In Morocco, Boeing and Safran have established a joint venture, Morocco Aero Technical Interconnect Systems Aerospace, to manufacture wire bundles and harnesses. Boeing also supports sourcing and engineering to establish an advanced manufacturing research centre in Morocco.

In Ethiopia, Boeing expanded its wire harness procurement by working with Ethiopian Airlines to establish a new manufacturing facility at the airline’s base in Addis Ababa. Ethiopian Airlines also produces thermo-acoustic insulation blankets for the 737 MAX through a joint venture with an Italian Boeing supplier, Geven-SkyTecno, at the airline’s MRO plant.

In South Africa, Boeing signed an agreement with Aerosud to manufacture airframe parts. “Boeing is committed to fostering a self-sustaining and competitive African aviation sector through such initiatives,” Teferra said.

SAF APPROACH

In 2016, South African Airways marked a milestone by conducting Africa’s first passenger flights powered by SAF. According to Teferra this

achievement was made possible through a collaboration between Boeing, SAA, the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (RSB), Sunchem SA, and SkyNRG, which developed biofuel from tobacco plants.

Fast forward to 2023, and Boeing and RSB published a study that underscores the potential for SAF production in sub-Saharan Africa while creating jobs and driving just energy transition. The study identified brassica carinata (Ethiopian mustard) as a promising feedstock for biofuels, capable of addressing both food and energy

needs. Additionally, it highlighted the significant potential of utilising invasive alien plants in South Africa for SAF production.

RESTORING TRUST

In the wake of the two fatal crashes of the 737 MAX in Indonesia and Ethiopia in 2018 and 2019, plus a door plug that blew off an Alaska Airlines 737 Max in early 2024, Boeing’s safety and manufacturing approach has been under intense scrutiny.

“There is work under way across Boeing to improve our culture, restore trust and deliver for our customers,” explained Teferra. “We are focused on stabilising the business, implementing our safety and quality plan under the supervision of the FAA and improving execution on our commitments.

“Boeing’s safety and quality plan focuses on four areas: elevating our safety and quality culture, investing in workforce training, simplifying manufacturing processes and plans, and eliminating defects. The plan also outlines key

performance indicators (KPIs) to continuously monitor and manage the health of our production system,” he said.

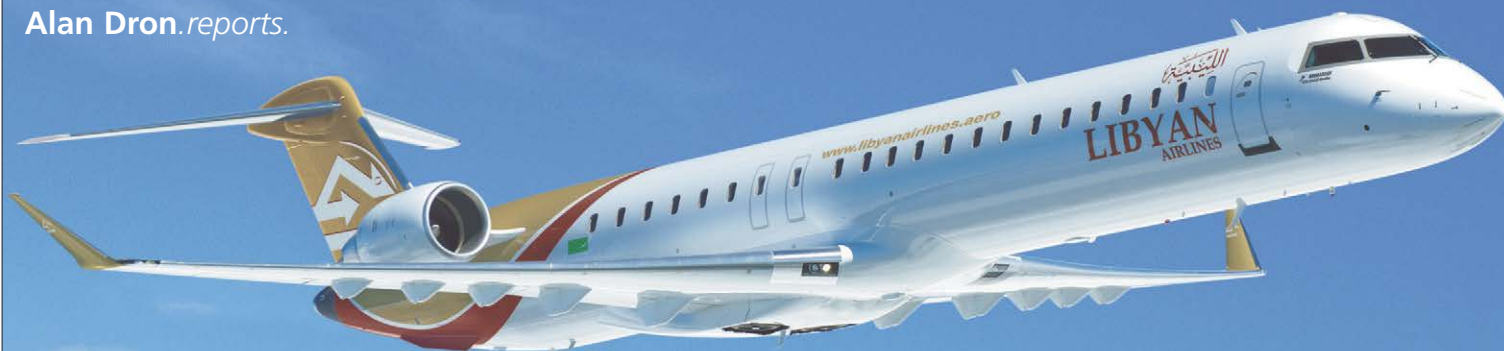
“The plan is on course with progress showing tangible improvements. Boeing addressed more than 70 per cent of action items in commercial aircraft production based on employee feedback, instituted new random quality audits, added hundreds of hours of new curriculum to training programmes, mapped and prepared thousands of work instructions for revision.

“Additionally, we track significantly reduced defects in 737 fuselage assembly at Spirit AeroSystems by increasing inspection points at build locations and implementing a customer quality approval process.

“Boeing continues to make improvements in each of the four focus areas,” Teferra concluded. ▲

IMAGE: ALL SORTZ

Will Libya gain a new national airline? The country's government wants one, but details behind the plan are scarce.
Alan Dron.reports.



Libya in a state over new airline

Libyan Airlines has operated the CRJ900 since 2007.
IMAGE BOMBARDIER

Confusion surrounds the announcement by Libya's Government of National Unity that it intends to create a new state-owned national airline.

Initial indications were that the move would result in the amalgamation of Libyan Airlines and Afriqiyah Airways, but sources at Afriqiyah tell *African Aerospace* that this is not the case.

"There's a decree by the government that a technical team has been created, but nobody knows what's going on," the source said. "It's very strange. We don't know how it has come about. Libyan Airlines is the national carrier and Afriqiyah Airways is a state-owned company with different objectives."

Both airlines come under the control of the state-owned holding organisation, the Libyan African Aviation Holding Company.

The Tripoli government has said that setting up a new airline forms part of a wider plan to invest in the country's infrastructure and improve the airline sector's competitiveness. However, few other details have been released. In particular, there has been no indication as to how the new airline would be funded, especially when the Government of National Unity's financial resources are limited.

The country split into rival factions in 2014 between the United Nations-backed Government of National Unity in Tripoli and Tobruk-based general Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army, with both parties backed by different groups of nations.

The source suggested that the government may have floated the suggestion of a new state-owned airline to gauge reaction from the airline community in the country. So far, reaction has ranged from puzzlement to frustration, partly because of the lack of money to pay for more basic requirements for Libya's population and also because state-owned enterprises have a history of being heavily loss-making.

Additionally, while Libyans would undoubtedly appreciate having more international destinations to which they could fly, the chances of any new airline attracting significant inbound traffic seems slight. The European Union's flight ban on Libyan-registered airlines is still in place and most western nations advise their citizens not to travel to the country,

because of the continuing political uncertainty there.

In February, an International Conference on Air Sovereignty, held in Tripoli, called on European countries imposing a no-fly zone on Libyan aircraft to drop the ban, the official state news agency LANA reported.

The conference called for the formation of a committee of experts and specialists in the fields of international law, civil and military aviation from the country's defence and foreign affairs ministries, as well as Libya's civil aviation regulator, to follow up the implementation of the conference's recommendations with a view to lifting the bans imposed by some European countries.

□□□□□

In a possible sign of improving conditions, several international carriers have begun to return to Libya, including Emirates, EgyptAir, Royal Jordanian and Turkish Airlines, while pursuing its objective of being the largest airline on the continent. ITA Airways, the Italian flag-carrier, followed suit a few months ago.

However, in an indication that the European Aviation Safety Agency retains reservations about the safety of operating into the country, it stipulated that all ITA Airways' aircraft must make their landing approaches to Tripoli's Mitiga Airport from over the Mediterranean Sea.

As well as the two state-owned carriers, Libya has around six privately-owned airlines, including Air Libya, Berniq Airways, Bouraq Air, Ghadames Air, Libyan Wings and Medsky Airways.

Libyan Airlines and Afriqiyah operate domestic services as well as international routes to a small number of destinations, including Tunis, Sfax, Cairo and Istanbul. All the carriers have small fleets – typically based around Airbus A320, A330s and Bombardier CRJs, some of which are parked.

Aviation in the North African country is still recovering from the disruption caused by the civil war and instability that followed the 2011 overthrow of former ruler Muammar Gaddafi.

Attention will now focus on the Libyan government, to see if further details of the planned new airline are forthcoming. ▲

▼ In a possible sign of improving conditions, several international carriers have begun to return to Libya. ▲

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CORSAIR CONSOLIDATION UNDERPINS GROWTH PLAN

Corsair has unveiled its new development strategy and a positive financial performance in 2024. The airline is refocusing on its three pillars: the West Indies, the Indian Ocean and Africa. According to Pascal de Izaguirre, CEO of Corsair, "2025 will be a year of consolidation".

Corsair completed its fleet renewal plan at the beginning of the year with the delivery of its ninth and last Airbus A330neo. The new aircraft made its inaugural flight between Paris-Orly and Cotonou in Benin.

According to the airline's CEO, this ambitious project, launched in 2020, was brought to completion on time despite the challenges facing the global supply chain. Pascal de Izaguirre pointed out that: "This modernisation reflects our commitment to offer a high-quality product, always at competitive prices" alongside a more environmentally-friendly flight experience.

Corsair is committed to energy transition through fleet renewal and commonality especially with the Airbus A330neo, which reduces fuel consumption and CO2 emissions per seat by 25 per cent, and noise footprint by 60 per cent.

The new fleet will support its newly-defined route development plan after reassessing its network efficiency and profitability amidst a competitive environment. Corsair will connect the capital of



Corsair received its first A330neo delivery in 2021. It received its 9th earlier this year.

IMAGE: AIRBUS - JEAN VINCENT REYMONDON

Republic of Congo Brazzaville in Q2 2025.

The airline also announced that it will stop its transatlantic Paris-Montreal route next summer to "refocus on its three pillars: the West Indies, the Indian Ocean and Africa". According to Corsair this closure after two decades is due to "a change in strategy" in the wake of an overall restructuring and repositioning plan to address new challenges.

After six years in the red, Corsair announced positive financial results for the 2023/2024 financial year, with an operating profit of €3m (US\$3.25m), +€40.1m (US\$43.5m) compared with the previous year. Its revenue increased by nine per cent to €701m

(US\$759.7m). It has recorded a strong growth in freight (+17 per cent) and ancillary revenues (+43 per cent), as well as an increase in the number of passengers carried, exceeding 1,400,000 people.

Pascal de Izaguirre told the press that these financial results obtained after rigorous cost management show "the solidity of our strategy and the unwavering commitment of our teams".

Corsair is embarked on a new era of growth. The airline aims to restore its place in its traditional markets while flying to new destinations. Let's see how it adapts to evolving passenger preferences and new market dynamics.



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The first use of the Cape Town Convention in Nigeria saw a Bombardier Regional Jet of Arik Air repatriated to Canada.

IMAGE: BOMBARDIER



EASY LEASY?

The Nigerian government's decision to sign up to the international agreement that governs the aircraft leasing market may make it easier for the country's airlines to expand their fleets.

Alan Dron reports.

Nigeria's adoption of the Cape Town Convention (CTC) should make it easier for the country's airlines to access the global airline leasing market. For many years, lessors have effectively blacklisted the West African nation, concerned that they would be unable to force the country's airlines to return leased aircraft in the event of a carrier defaulting on lease payments.

In September 2024, however, Abuja signed up to the CTC, which sets international legal parameters defining ownership rights of high-value aviation assets. It seeks to solve the problem with individual nations' legal systems having different approaches to securities, title retention and lease agreements, which creates uncertainty for lending institutions.

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The CTC has already been tested in court. In a decision late last year, the Federal High Court in Lagos allowed Export Development Canada (EDC) to repossess a Bombardier CRJ1000 regional jet operated by Arik Air.

"First victory in court in Nigeria courtesy of the Cape Town Convention," Nigeria's minister of aviation and aerospace development Festus Keyamo posted on his X (formerly Twitter) page early this year. "The courts applied

the CTC to the fullest and allowed instant repossession of an aircraft."

Nigerian legal publication Lawyard noted that the case "marks a pivotal moment for Nigeria's aviation sector, highlighting the country's growing commitment to international leasing standards, particularly those of the Cape Town Convention."

The problems facing Nigerian airlines are well-known – small fleets, often consisting of elderly aircraft, that are insufficient to serve the needs of a nation of more than 235 million people.

Several Nigerian carriers have failed in recent years, or have been taken under government control by the Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON). AMCON has said it may still liquidate Arik Air, which has failed to repay debts.

Part of the problem is that many Nigerian airlines are owned by individuals – wealthy people, but whose funds are arguably insufficient to run an airline, or to buy new-build aircraft. Leasing offers a way for the country's airlines to expand their fleets with more modern aircraft less expensively than purchasing outright. Long-running plans to set up a new national airline with the help of Ethiopian Airlines foundered last year in the face of objections from some Nigerian airlines. ▲



High class: the Bombardier CRJ200, with its opulent 24-seat cabin.

IMAGE: XEJET

NO BUSINESS LIKE XEJET BUSINESS

New entrants in the Nigerian market continue to try to make an impact. One, XEJet, has launched an all-business-class service, initially between Lagos and Abuja.

Using Bombardier CRJ200 regional jets, XEJet has stripped out the 50 seats normally found in the type and replaced them with just 24 business-class seats.

All-business-class airlines have been tried in several countries before, with mixed results. Most have been set up in the US or Europe, but few have survived.

Several US and UK all-premium airlines – MAXjet, Eos Airlines and Silverjet – operating transatlantic services in the early years of the century collapsed in the 2008 financial crisis. British Airways flew an Airbus A318 in an all-business configuration between London City Airport and New York JFK until the pandemic, when shrivelling passenger numbers brought

about the closure of the service, which never re-opened.

Today, Paris-based La Compagnie and newcomer Beond Airlines of the Maldives, continue the tradition.

□□□□□

XEJet, which has just received its third CRJ200, hopes to carve a niche in the country's airline sector with its new service, which it recently stepped up to double-daily flights between the country's political capital and main economic hub.

The airline also operates three Embraer 145s in more conventional 50-seat layout, for leasing and ad hoc charters. One is being used by XEJet subsidiary Air Sierra Leone for regional services, with the Freetown-based airline using XEJet's AOC. ▲

■ See Breaking New Ground - page 43

In the wake of the drone revolution, major drone companies, including 100 per cent African ones, are not only reinforcing but rethinking the use of drones to better support local populations.

Anuradha Deenapanray Chappard looks at an overview of this silent, yet game-changing, technology.

Air care: Zipline's system saves lives, prevents disease, and is the most cost-effective public health intervention aimed at increasing immunisation.

IMAGE: ZIPLINE

Care via air: How drones save lives

Drone technology is no doubt set to be a more powerful tool to help the emerging continent address socio-economic and environmental challenges. According to CNBC Africa, Africa's drone industry could reach \$2bn by 2025.

Since our story on pioneering entrepreneur William Elong, who launched the first civil drone company Drone Africa (Algo Drone) in Cameroon in 2015, this sector has benefited from sustained progress in unmanned aerial systems (UAS).

Drones have gradually revolutionised sectors such as agriculture, including food security challenged by climate change, healthcare through blood and medical equipment deliveries, especially in remote and landlocked areas devoid of road infrastructure.

Companies like Drone Africa Service embody the efficient use of drones to deliver essential supplies to these communities.

Since 2019, drone logistics company Zipline, which operates the world's largest drone delivery service, has saved thousands of children's lives through the timely delivery of vaccines and medicines.

Zipline's autonomous drone logistics system isn't just saving lives and preventing disease, but is also the most cost-effective public health intervention aimed at increasing immunisation. Its fully-electric, battery-powered drones fly with zero-carbon emissions in countries like Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Nigeria and Rwanda.

Statistics show that in Rwanda and Ghana, partnerships with Zipline have enabled a 51 per cent reduction in deaths from post-partum haemorrhages through timely blood deliveries. This is a leading cause of maternal mortality in

sub-Saharan Africa. In Rwanda, drones deliver about 75 per cent of the nation's blood supply outside Kigali, reaching remote areas within 15 minutes.

A recent study in Ghana has underlined the effectiveness of medical drones – in both cost and time taken – to move medical supplies into communities that were previously nearly impossible to reach using conventional means of transport.

Ghana, Ivory Coast and Congo use TerraHaptix's Archer drones, which are locally made in Nigeria. TerraHaptix, co-founded in Abuja by 21-year-old Nigerians Nathan Nwachukwu and Maxwell Maduka, is Africa's leading drone manufacturer. Nwachukwu recently announced that the company had received 300 orders for Archer X and that they are reaching international markets like the USA.

With growing awareness on the determining role of drones throughout Africa, governments are multiplying partnerships and investing in the sector. Burkina Faso Flying, the Burkina Faso franchise for WeRobotics' Flying Labs network of drones has joined hands with the Burkinabe government in the latter's efforts to promote irrigation in agriculture.

□□□□□

The west African country relies heavily on agriculture, with an estimate to employ about 80 per cent of the workforce. But with rainy periods becoming shorter due to climate change, the government is turning to irrigation to supplement farming efforts and ensure food security.

Burkina Faso Flying Labs is therefore lending a hand by launching a pilot project to develop irrigation systems.

The Drone Company Awards Grants for Humanitarian Operations is powering the momentum gained by the sector over the past decade. The Resilient Futures Grant Programme will support four organisations namely the HALO Trust, Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, Help.NGO and Cryospheric Society of Nepal.

In an extensive analysis, GSD Global, a mission-driven consulting firm dedicated to introducing and scaling transformative innovations in emerging markets said that "Africa is fast becoming a hotspot for drone innovation". It underlined that with an expanding market and vast potential, drone technology can unlock solutions to face the continent's most pressing challenges.

The future of drone technology in Africa is very promising with innovations in AI and machine-learning integration for automated crop monitoring and predictive analytics for healthcare logistics.

According to World Bank estimates, the drone sector could generate more than 200,000 jobs across Africa by 2030. It will contribute significantly to economic development and equip youth with valuable tech skills throughout the continent.

▼ In Rwanda and Ghana, partnerships with Zipline have enabled a 51 per cent reduction in deaths from post-partum haemorrhages through timely blood deliveries. ▲



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EGYPT'S CHINESE J-10CEs THREATEN F-16s FUTURE

Just when you think the Egyptian Air Force fighter force could not get any more diverse, it has reportedly taken delivery of its first Chinese Chengdu J-10CE fighters. Alan Warnes reports.

Last September, at the Egypt International Air Show, reports emerged that the EAF was set to acquire the Chinese J-10CE although neither CATIC or the EAF would confirm this. It has been suggested that the J-10CE in the static display at Zhuhai Airshow in November last year was actually Egyptian.

The fourth-generation fighter could bring a lot of new capabilities, with more advanced weapons.

The real deal-maker is that China would probably loan the finances for such an extremely-capable combat aircraft equipped with the KLJ-10 AESA radar, the Chinese PL-12 (export version of SD-10) air-to-air missile with a range of 35-45 miles, and the impressive and potent PL-15 with a dual-pulse rocket motor that China claims gives the missile a range of 100+ miles.

Being armed with these weapons will

ramp up the EAF's capabilities and could pose a threat to several countries in the region.

It's unclear how many J-10CEs are to be purchased, but the survivors of the 42 F-16A/Bs acquired in from 1982 and the 16 Mirage 2000s could be targets.

Egypt has acquired Chinese fighters in the past – Shenyang F-6, Chengdu F-7 as well as K-8 Karakoram jet trainers, so the EAF is accustomed to the Chinese logistics and maintenance systems.



The EAF has taken delivery of 220 US-built Lockheed Martin F-16s, 53 French Dassault Rafale F3-Rs, 50 Mikoyan MiG-29M/M2s and 16 Mirage 2000BM/Ems.

The logistics of operating such a diverse range of combat aircraft must be a real challenge that would usually be

▼ Armed with these weapons will ramp up the EAF's capabilities and could pose a threat to several countries in the region. ▲

frowned upon by air force leadership, but procurement in Egypt is clearly led by president Abdel Fattah El-Sisi.

With little budget to procure aircraft, the Egyptian government relies on grants, loans or aid from its allies. Last year the US government funded Egypt with \$1.3 billion, under the 1978 Israel-Egypt Peace Accord. China will undoubtedly do the same, as it increases its presence in Africa.

Modernisation of its fighter fleets is a priority because of the lack of capability on the F-16s and the Mirage 2000s. Between 1982-2015, 42 F-16A/Bs and 178 F-16C/Ds were delivered through Foreign Military Sale Peace Vector I-VII programmes, but they have never been upgraded with any smart weapon capability much to the EAF's frustration.

They can't use the joint direct attack munition (JDAM), AIM-9X Sidewinder, AIM-120 advanced medium-range air-to-

ZAMBIA HOSTS 14TH AFRICAN AIR CHIEFS SUMMIT

The 14th African Air Chiefs Symposium (AACS), co-hosted by the Zambia Air Force and U.S. Air Forces Europe-Air Forces Africa, took place in Lusaka, Zambia in February.

More than 240 participants from 38 nations attended the symposium to include air chiefs, liaison officers, women, peace and security representatives and senior enlisted representatives. This year's theme was 'Strategic Collaboration and Operational Excellence: Enhancing effectiveness of the Association of African Air Forces.'

Zambia Air Force commander Lt Gen Oscar Nyoni, the Association of African Air Forces (AAAF) chairman, highlighted the challenges Zambia faces with natural disasters and the importance of gathering air chiefs across the continent.

"During the African Air Chiefs Symposium 2024 in Tunisia, it became abundantly clear that the AAAF needed to redirect its efforts toward fostering multilateral collaboration



and interoperability to confront these shared challenges effectively," said Nyoni.

At the event, African air forces conducted a tabletop exercise (TTX) focused on a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief scenario. The exercise was a key step in advancing the AAAF exercise series with the end goal to conduct an intra-continental live-fly exercise in 2026.

Commander of US Air Forces in Europe - Air Forces Africa and AAAF co-chairman,

US Airmen and delegates from various African nations attend the closing ceremony of the 14th African Air Chiefs symposium at Lusaka, Zambia February 21, 2025.

IMAGE: USAF

general James Hecker who attended on the third day (19th) praised the participant's accomplishments in the TTX in addressing considerations ranging from fuel to diplomatic clearances.

A Women, Peace and Security panel brought together WPS representatives from 25 African nations to share experiences and challenges faced in their respective air forces.

The keynote panelists included major general Fatuma Ahmed, the Kenya Air Force air chief and first African female air chief, as well as United Nations representatives.

The Nigerian Air Force will chair the AAAF next year and host for AACS 2026. In his acceptance speech, air marshal Hasan B. Abubakar the NAF CAS said air power was vital in tackling terrorism, insurgency and transnational crime, calling for strengthened cooperation among African Air Forces to enhance continental security. ▲



air missile (AMRAAM) or Sniper targeting pods because the F-16s are still operating a less-capable AN/APG-66 and inferior versions of the AN/APG-68 radars. There have been reports of upgrades on offer, but this is not believed to have happened.

Egypt was all set to purchase 30 Sukhoi Su-35s under a \$2 billion contract signed in 2018. Several were seen at Sukhoi's Komsomolsk on Amur facility, in the wake of the deal, but deliveries never took place because the US announced in 2019 it was ready to impose sanctions under the Countering America's

Adversaries Through Sanction Act (CAATSA) that would have seen the withdrawal of US security assistance funding valued at more than \$1 billion annually to Egypt. Instead the Su-35s bound for Egypt are now heading to Iran.

□ □ □ □ □

In the past, there has been intense speculation the EAF was going to buy 24 Eurofighters in June 2022. The contract, said to be worth about \$3 billion as part of a bigger arms deal, valued at between \$10-12 billion brokered by Leonardo,

would have also included 24 M-346 jet trainers. The deal was never signed, and subsequent discussions with industry have revealed it never really got closed to being signed off.

Flying cutting-edge Dassault Rafales and Chinese J-10CEs without any ITAR issues, funded by the governments of both countries in loans, is certainly a good option for a nation that has clearly got enemies. Turkey and Qatar both supported the Muslim Brotherhood which was expelled from Egypt in 2013 after being elected two years earlier. Then there is Iran, and in the past Israel. ▲

Above: The J-10 is set to ramp up the EAF's capabilities, that have been left behind with the USA's reluctance to modernise its fleet of around 200 F-16s. Inset: The EAF took delivery of the newer F-16C/Ds Block 62s after sanctions were lifted, but they are more than 10 years old now and like the rest of the fleet need modernisation.

IMAGES: ALAN WARNES

NIGERIAN DO 228 RETURNS TO AIR AFTER 23 YEARS

Aircraft engineers and technicians of the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) have returned a 19-seat Dornier Do 228 that has been grounded for 23 years.

The Do 228, registered 5N-MPS, was previously operated by the Ministry of Mines, Power and Steel and grounded at Kaduna since 2001. A presidential directive from the ministries, departments and agencies, which has taken on the role of transferring grounded to the NAF, saw the NAF take on the challenge of reactivating an aircraft that had only accumulated 1,081 flight hours.

Work on NAF-039 (as it has been numbered) was taken on by a team of five engineering officers and 40 technicians from NAF 431 engineering group, at Kaduna.

The job commenced in June 2024 and was completed three months later in September. The chief of the air staff, air marshal Hasa Abubakar praised the 431 engineer group



and spoke of the NAF's resolve to optimise resources and strengthen its fleet.

"The successful reactivation of NAF -39 is not just an operational gain; it is a statement of our commitment to self-reliance," he said.

This success comes off the back of the first country 4,800 hour inspection of another Do 228 in January 2024. The Nigerian Air Force originally took on nine Do 228s, although at least three have been written off.

Before and after: The Dornier Do 228 in its dilapidated state - and flying after repair.

IMAGE: NIGERIAN AIR FORCE



The first three (NAF 027 to NAF 029) were delivered in the early 80s, and the remainder (NAF 030 to 035) arrived in 1996-97 after being stored by the manufacturer, Dornier, which was subsequently taken over by RUAG and then General Atomics in 2021.

The serial number of the rejuvenated NAF 039 would suggest that this is the fourth Do 228 to be transferred to the NAF from Nigerian civil agencies. ▲

ALGERIA CONFIRMS ACQUISITION OF SU-57

Algeria finally confirmed on February 12 that it is the first customer of the fifth-generation Sukhoi Su-57 fighter, and that pilots are currently undergoing training in Russia. Deliveries are scheduled to begin in late 2025.

Alexander Mikheyev, the head of Russia's state-owned Rosoboronexport defence agency had confirmed the first foreign client would receive the first aircraft in 2025.

□□□□□

It was announced at China's Zhuhai Airshow in November last year that there was a first customer for the Sukhoi, which attended the Aero India 24 airshow in mid-February.

Unconfirmed reports would suggest that 14 aircraft were on order to replace the MiG-25 Foxbats retired in June 2022, and that more enhanced versions would eventually arrive later in the decade to replace the MiG-29 Fulcrums and Su-24 Fencer fleets.

Speculation that the Algerian Air Force had ordered the Su-57s surfaced in 2020 when Algerian military officers were seen

High five: Russia's fifth-generation Sukhoi Su-57 will be delivered to Algeria by the end of 2025. It is seen here at Aero India 25 airshow in February. Like Algeria, the Indian Air Force also operates Su-30s seen in the background.

IMAGE: SHREY CHOPRA



viewing the model with Russian officials on state TV.

The Su-57 has been involved in combat operations in Syria (2018) and Ukraine (2022) where undoubtedly it would have been used for test and evaluation in combat, allowing both the air force and Rosoboronexport to correct any issues.

The purchase will go some way to cutting the capability gap the Royal Moroccan Air Force is opening up against long-time foe the Algeria Air Force, with the former set to enhance its Lockheed Martin F-16 fleets as well as having aspirations to acquire the USA's fifth-gen F-35 – (see below). ▲

MOROCCO F-35s DEAL COULD AGITATE NEIGHBOURS

If all the speculation in early February is to be believed, Morocco could soon become the first Arab and African nation to acquire the Lockheed Martin F-35.

The deal for 32 aircraft has been given the go ahead by Israel, which has a big say on Arab nations buying the advanced fighter, and is estimated to be around \$17 billion over 45 years that would include procurement and maintenance costs.

□□□□□

Sources at IDEX in February indicated that the return of president Donald Trump for a second term, could see the unfinished F-35 business that he started during his first four years in office finally given the green light.

Lockheed Martin representatives at IDEX allegedly provided an in-depth briefing to a Moroccan military delegation on the fifth-generation jet's capabilities.

From Morocco's perspective it would provide a huge leap in capability. In August 2020, the RMAF's purchase of 24 Lockheed Martin F-16C/D block 72s (20 F-16Cs, four F-



16Ds) equipped with Pratt & Whitney F100-229 engines, was cleared by the US government, with deliveries expected to take place this year.

The surviving 23 F-16s are being upgraded to the more advanced F-16V, equipped with the Northrop Grumman APG-83 active electronically-scanned array (AESA) radar, Lockheed Martin AN/AAQ-33 sniper pod, Terma AN/ALQ-213 EW management systems

Could Morocco be the first Arab and African nation to acquire the F-35A? This would certainly cause Algeria a few headaches.

IMAGE: ALAN WARNES

and L3Harris AN/ALQ-211 advanced integrated defensive electronic warfare system (AIDEWS).

Morocco's two new ISR Gulfstream 550s being integrated by L3 Systems, with Israeli Elta systems, at its Greenville, Texas facility and along with new Israeli spy satellites, will ensure a keen eye can be kept on its neighbours and geopolitical rivals Algeria.

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It must be alarmed at the build up the Royal Moroccan Air Force's combat edge, that threatens to eclipse its own capabilities.

This is a major reason why Algeria is set to become the first export customer of Russia's fifth-gen Sukhoi Su-57, although unlike Morocco it doesn't integrate all its war fighting assets to anything close to the way that its neighbour does.

The F-35/F-16 integration will certainly be helped with so many other allied air forces in NATO going down the same training route well before Morocco would receive their fifth gen fighters in around 2035. ▲

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Namibia has taken delivery of two Shaanxi Y-9Es, a Chinese derivative of the An-12.

IMAGE: NAMIBIAN AIR FORCE.



In January 2025 the key eastern DRC city of Goma was surrounded by M23 rebels. This meant that more than 2,000 peacekeeping troops were effectively held hostage in their bases and were rapidly running out of supplies, with no clear idea of how to provide support – or rescue them.

The South African government had to charter Ilyushin Il-76s to fly to ‘safe’ airfields as distant as Lubumbashi (1,100 km from Goma) or Burundi in support of the trapped troops and to return the bodies of dead soldiers.

The *African Defence Review* quoted retired brigadier general David Baburam, former head of AU Mission Support, “Normally they say operations drive logistics, but I think in Africa, logistics drive operations because the operations must be based on what logistics are available. You can’t keep troops in the operational area for three months if you can’t feed them.”

□□□□□

Increasingly military planners are having to rely on civil aviation for troop movements – particularly the airlines. African airlines are however not well suited to fulfilling this role as the demands of their own schedules must first be met.

And they have little if any spare capacity to provide airlift for military interventions.

Chartering airlift aircraft has its own problems – particularly related to delays in the availability of suitable aircraft and the refusal of insurers to carry the risk in war zones. Hence the limitation of having to fly into safe, but distant airports.

RESCUE OPS IN NEED OF A LIFT

The resumption of conflict in the DRC has once again brought to the fore the chronic lack of strategic airlift capability in Africa.

Guy Leitch reports.

When military airlift is not available to move peacekeeping forces to quickly contain trouble spots, the results can be tragic. In 2012, when Islamic insurgents attempted to take over Mali, the ECOWAS intervention was delayed for months due to a lack of available aircraft. Similar delays occurred in Sudan’s Darfur region in 2010.

The M23 takeover of eastern DRC has once again highlighted the chronic shortage of African airlift capability.

Rwandan Air Force lieutenant general Jean Jacques Mupenzi said: “Our region is vast and characterised by limited transportation infrastructure, hence it requires effective air mobility mechanisms to bridge distances, support replenishment of troops in theatre ... and attend to humanitarian assistance.”

A further concern for South Africa is that it doesn’t have suitable aircraft to meet its search and rescue responsibilities, particularly far offshore.

Individual African countries find that they cannot afford to acquire and maintain a strategic airlift capability. To bridge this gap, governments are looking at innovative ways to acquire aircraft,

maintain them, and pool resources. A proposed solution is the creation of an Africa Air Mobility Command Centre. This would combine the participating nations’ airlift capability to support peacekeeping initiatives.

There has been some progress. Most recently, Namibia has taken delivery of two Shaanxi Y-9Es, a Chinese derivative of the An-12.

The proposed Africa Air Mobility Command Centre includes an air transport sharing mechanism. Under the plan, nations with air capabilities would agree to provide support when called upon.

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At the regional level, African governments are also responding to the need to create airlift sharing mechanisms.

This is particularly to support the Africa standby force, which is aligned to the regional economic communities. This force is mandated to respond to crises in as few as 14 days, but often has been unable to meet that timeline.

“In the Southern African development community, we face many disasters and crises, and we don’t have the requisite airlift capability,” major general Hendrick Thuthu Rakgantswana, Botswana’s air chief, has said. “So, it means that we have to come together and pool our resources.”

“I think it’s every African’s dream to see an African aircraft with all African flags across its tail, flying across the continent providing relief and support to Africans,” said Tunisian Air Force colonel Kais Sghaier during a 2022 conference in Botswana. ▲

▼ Individual African countries find that they cannot afford to acquire and maintain a strategic airlift capability. ▲

NAMIBIA RESPONSE BOOSTED BY CHINA TRANSPORTS

Namibia has continued its longstanding military equipment relationship with China with the delivery of a pair of Shaanxi Y-9 medium transports.

The Y-9, powered by four WoJiang WJ-6C turboprops, is a stretched and upgraded Chinese development of the Shaanxi Y-8F.

The programme was a collaborative effort with Ukrainian company Antonov – the designers of the Soviet-era Antonov An-12 from which the Y-9 is ultimately derived – and was aimed at competing with the Lockheed Martin C-130J Super Hercules.

Namibia is the first recipient of the Y-9E export variant, with a maximum payload of 25 tonnes, or the ability to carry up to 106

paratroopers. The Y-9Es are a major advance in capability over the Namibian Air Force's existing largest aircraft, the Antonov An-26 light tactical transport.

They will give the country the ability to transport supplies to remote outposts in the large southern African nation, or to carry men or material elsewhere in Africa on peacekeeping or humanitarian missions.

"The acquisition of these medium transport aircraft will go a long way in improving and enhancing the Namibian Defence Force's operational capacity and readiness to respond at short notice to any situation that might require the involvement of our soldiers, both during peacetime and wartime emergencies," president

Nangolo Mbumba was quoted as saying by local media.

China has provided Namibia with several components of its air arm.

Most significantly, it provided a squadron of six F-7NMs, the Chinese unlicensed version of the Soviet MiG-21, according to specialist South African website DefenceWeb, together with four K-8 training jets and two Y12-11 light transports.

Meanwhile, Nigeria has bolstered its fleet of Dassault-Dornier Alpha Jets with the purchase of a further 12 surplus examples of the Franco-German advanced trainer and light strike aircraft to supplement the estimated eight examples currently in service.

It is understood that six of the aircraft will be restored to flying condition and enter operational service, while the remaining six will be used as a source of spare parts for the operational fleet.

The Alpha Jets have been extensively used as ground-attack aircraft in the continuing campaign against Boko Haram Islamist rebels in the north of the country. ▲



Namibia's Shaanxi Y-9Es are the first export variant of the Y-9 in service with China's air force.
IMAGE: ALERTS/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Safe flight: The helicopters will improve Zambia's capability to conduct peacekeeping operations.

IMAGE: ZAMBIA AIR FORCE



US APPROVES SALE OF BELL 412 HELICOPTERS TO ZAMBIA

The US State Department has contracted helicopter manufacturer Bell Textron to supply an undisclosed number of Bell 412 enhanced performance exportable medium lift transport helicopters to the Zambian Air Force at an estimated cost of US\$100 million.

In a notice issued to the US Congress on January 13, the Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said the contract also includes the supply, to Zambia, of radio communication and navigation systems, weather radar and transponder capabilities as well as qualification and transition training for pilots and maintenance crews.

In addition, Bell Textron will also provide, in-country contractor field support services, programme management reviews, technical assistance, aviation ground support systems as well as spares and repairs among other deliverables.

"The proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping improve the security of an important partner that continues to be an important force for political stability and economic progress in South Central Africa," the DSCA stated.

"The proposed sale will improve Zambia's

capability to conduct peacekeeping (operations), regional security, disaster response and humanitarian missions over long distances and in non-standard weather conditions. Zambia will have no difficulty absorbing this equipment into its armed forces."

The acquisition will be funded by the DSCA through the foreign military sales (FMS) programme. Although the number was not disclosed, the sale will add more Bell power to the Zambian Air Force, which commissioned two new Bell 412 attack helicopters to its fleet. ▲

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The Moroccan authorities are continuing their investments to modernise and enhance the capacity of the Kingdom's airports. Forty-two billion dirhams (US\$4.3bn) will be invested by 2030 to consolidate Morocco's strategic position as a regional aviation hub and preferred tourist destination.

MOROCCO'S \$4.3bn HUB CAPITAL...

Office National des Aéroports (ONDA) director, Adel El Fakir detailed the future strategy and challenges underlying the airport development plan for 2025-2030 last February.

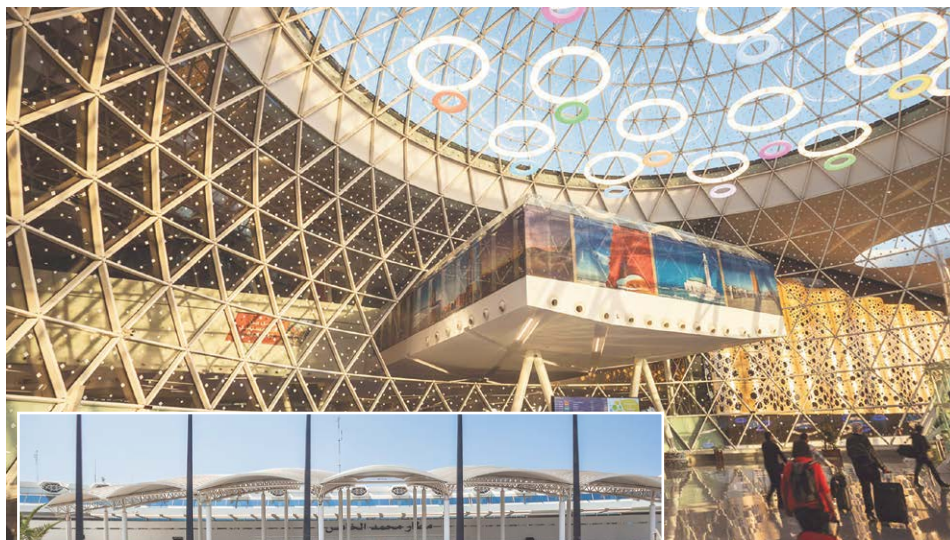
In line with decisions taken by the council of ministers in December 2024, this ambitious roadmap aims at supporting the country's development dynamics. It will also enable the aviation sector and its ecosystem to face major challenges: the surge in air traffic (+21 per cent in 2024 compared with 2023), the development plan of Royal Air Maroc (from 50 to 200 aircraft by 2037) and the FIFA World Cup, co-hosted by Morocco in 2030.

All parties concerned are working with the same vision: transforming Moroccan airports into strategic, connected and attractive hubs to meet the country's economic and tourist aspirations.

The capacity of Casablanca's Mohammed V Airport, which is at the heart of this transformation, will be increased from 14 to 35 million passengers by 2029, thus establishing itself as an intercontinental hub connecting Africa, Europe, Asia and America. The airport will also have a new control tower, a new runway and enhanced intermodal passenger transport.

Other airports, notably Marrakech, Agadir, Tangier and Fez, will also undergo major expansion work to double their capacity and respond to the strong growth in air traffic.

'Airports 2030' also focuses on a seamless



Morocco's vision: Marrakech and Casablanca (inset) airports will be transformed.

IMAGES: ONDA

customer experience through cutting-edge technological solutions, on capacity building and good governance to meet international requirements and standards.

"From sky management to the expansion of our airport platforms, from the tarmac to baggage handling on arrival or departure, from check-in to boarding, the customer journey will

experience a transformation that is already under way, digital but also human", underlined Adel El Fakir.

The Moroccan aerospace industry has recorded a remarkable 14.9 per cent rise in 2024. This growth was driven by the very good performance of the assembly segment, with a 23.6 per cent increase in sales. ▲

TANZANIA CAN BE A SPRINGBOARD FOR ÇELEBI'S AFRICAN EXPANSION



Growth strategy: Çelebi aims to be a leading ground handler in Africa.

IMAGE: ÇELEBI

Turkey's first private ground handling company, Çelebi Aviation, has sealed a new partnership with Turkish Airlines to expand its global footprint.

Since last December it is providing ground handling and passenger services for nine weekly Turkish Airlines flights to Julius Nyerere International Airport in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.

Through this new partnership Çelebi has not only consolidated its presence in Tanzania where it started operating in 2021, but has also launched its

largest operation in Africa. According to the ground handler this new partnership will increase notably its operational efficiency in Tanzania.

Dave William Dörner, Çelebi Aviation Group CEO, says that this partnership is a milestone and will enable the ground handler to share its 65 years' experience with Tanzania and the African continent. This operation marks Çelebi Aviation's first scheduled wide-body flight in Africa.

"This operation is an important part of our growth

strategy in Africa and an opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to operational excellence. It will be a significant increase in our operational efficiency in Tanzania. We will continue to provide our customers with high-quality service through our comprehensive services and strong infrastructure," said Dörner.

It also shows the group's ambition to count among the leading ground handling providers in Africa. "This partnership is part of a larger strategy that will strengthen Çelebi Aviation's operations in Africa, not just in Tanzania."

Tanzania is part of Çelebi Aviation's expansion strategy to provide excellent ground handling services along with its ancillary products in Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

Çelebi is committed to digitalisation and sustainability. It is constantly reducing its carbon footprint through new technological solutions to enhance its services globally be it passenger and general services, ground equipment, aircraft cleaning or load control.

Çelebi is present in three continents, six countries (including Germany, Hungary, India and Indonesia) and operates 70 stations worldwide. ▲

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MRO set to break new ground in Africa

Digging deep: Festus Keyamo lays the foundation for the \$10m XEJet flight support engineering hub.

IMAGE: XEJET

*Africa is not blind to what must happen in MRO for its civil aviation to reach full potential. Recent moves by several airlines are promising, but more is needed. **Chuck Grieve** reports.*

Unscheduled maintenance issues forced Nigeria's Air Peace to cancel flights to six states in January. Meanwhile, numerous African-registered aircraft are reportedly languishing at foreign bases, prevented from rejoining their fleets by unpaid bills.

It's a familiar story. Ali Tounsi, secretary-general of ACI Africa, surprised nobody when he said in an African Airlines Association (AFRAA) webinar that infrastructure challenges continue to dog African aviation. He went on to note that the sector's success depended on stronger government engagement, regional cooperation, and strategic investment in infrastructure.

Despite encouraging figures, recovery from the pandemic was uneven across the continent. "Central Africa, for example, is lagging behind due to limited infrastructure and high operating costs, while political instability continues to affect parts of Northern Africa," Tounsi said in press reports.

Investor confidence appears to be picking up, said Lagos-based publication *BusinessDay* in reporting domestic MRO moves by United Nigeria airlines, XEJet and Ibom Air.

United Nigeria signed an MOU in 2024 with Cronos Aviation, an international charter airline based in Montreal, to build an MRO in Nigeria. The agreement includes transfer of technology from Cronos and help in technical training for United Nigeria personnel.

In late January, premium-class airline XEJet welcomed Nigerian aviation minister Festus Keyamo to turn the soil for its new \$10-million MRO, flight support and engineering centre at Abuja's Nnamdi Azikiwe international airport (see sidebar, page 44).

Meanwhile, Ibom Air is working with Airbus Consulting on a long-term MRO strategy and business plan that includes full-scope A220 work. The airline has been reported to be considering replacing its fleet of Bombardier CRJ900s with the Airbus type, ironically developed by Bombardier as the CSeries.

Continued
on Page 44

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43

Chief operating officer George Uriesi told an AFRAA webinar in 2024 that the decision had been made “to do our maintenance at home” but that “the investment is quite huge,” and staffing with qualified engineers would “require us to collaborate with an established MRO.”

The newspaper quoted industry analyst Olumide Ohunayo, director of research at Zenith Travels, as saying although the aviation minister had been approving establishment of MROs, their actual construction and certification remained hurdles to be overcome.

But the effort could pay off. With neighbouring countries still lacking their own MRO facilities, Nigeria would be well-placed to join the ranks of African countries including Morocco, Ethiopia and South Africa, which can handle repairs and servicing of components as well as airframes and engines.

Aviation success stories in China and the Middle East could serve as a blueprint to African airlines and governments, said captain Samuel Caulcrick, chief executive of Lagos-based Merchant Express Cargo Airlines. He told an interviewer that state-backed financing and subsidies had enabled enterprises to thrive through the provision of low-cost capital and investment in modern infrastructure, including MRO facilities.

Establishment of an aviation development bank (ADB) would be a game-changer for the sector, he said, citing the China Development Bank (CDB) as a model.

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Capt Caulcrick, a former rector of the Nigerian College of Aviation Technology (NCAT), Zaria, urged the government to set up the ADB as a specialised financial institution and provide initial capitalisation through funding, private sector investment or international partnerships, adding that the bank could collaborate with international aviation organisations, aircraft manufacturers and financial institutions to access expertise, funding, and technology.

Domestic MRO capabilities would bring substantial direct and indirect benefits by stemming the flow of foreign exchange that servicing aircraft abroad draws from the economy every year. At the recent Airline Economics Growth Frontiers Global in Dublin, stakeholders were adamant in interviews with the *News Agency of Nigeria* (NAN) that MRO capabilities had to be prioritised.

Among them was Hadiza Usman, special adviser to



ABUJA MRO UNDERLINES NIGERIA'S LEADERSHIP

In his remarks at the symbolic ground-breaking ceremony in Abuja, Nigerian aviation minister Festus Keyamo (above) commended the efforts of public and private stakeholders to advance Nigeria's aviation industry in support of the nation's economic vision.

“Since we came to office, we have been shouting about the issue of MROs, that we'd like to attract MROs into our aviation ecosystem.

“The government may not have all the money to give to you,” he said, “but the government must create this kind of enabling environment, the right type of policy, to support this type of growth and development.”

He said the search for investors had taken him to the “far end of the Earth. Now we have an indigenous operator, collaborating with indigenous banks, supporting this dream” which will include a training centre.

Xejet chief executive Emmanuel Iza highlighted the transformative potential of the facility which he views as “a symbol of our commitment to innovation and expansion.”

“The establishment of this facility is a testament to our belief in Nigeria's role as a leader in the continent's aviation future. By investing in infrastructure and capabilities, we also aim to strengthen Nigeria's position as a hub of connectivity, commerce, and tourism,” Iza said.

Construction will be handled by the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) over an 18-month period. Project finance is coming from Zenith Bank and Fidelity Bank. ▲

the Nigerian president on policy and coordination, who said prioritising MRO establishments would create jobs and save cost in Nigeria.

“For Nigeria, developing a strong local MRO capability is essential as the country looks to expand its aviation sector, particularly with plans to adopt dry leasing arrangements with Boeing,” she said, which made local MRO services indispensable for maintaining and managing these aircraft efficiently.

A “robust MRO industry” would save costs for airlines, enhance operational efficiency, and support the local economy by creating jobs and building technical expertise. Strengthening local MROs also aligned with the broader goal of reducing capital flight and fostering self-reliance in the aviation sector.

Elsewhere, Kenya Airways (KQ) has reached a milestone by gaining EASA Part 145 certification for line and base maintenance on Embraer E190 and Boeing 737 types, as well as line maintenance on the B787-8. It also covers component maintenance and specialised non-destructive testing (NDT).

With this certification, KQ can service European-registered aircraft, opening new business opportunities and reinforcing its position as a key player in global aviation maintenance, the carrier said in a statement.

The airline plans to expand its maintenance capabilities further as it seeks to establish itself as one of Africa's leading MRO providers.

□□□□

It has been exploring a partnership with SAA Technical (SAAT) to boost the airline's maintenance capabilities, with a long-term goal of establishing its MRO as an independent business unit.

This potential collaboration aligns with KQ's broader vision of creating a pan-African alliance among African carriers, a concept first proposed in 2021. With both airlines once more on a sound footing, KQ management is reportedly keen to restart discussions with SAA or pursue similar partnerships with other African carriers by 2027.

Fleet renewal across the continent is impacting MRO. In Angola, as part of its fleet modernisation efforts, TAAG Angola Airlines signed a 12-year total component support (TCS) contract with Lufthansa Technik for its new fleet of Boeing 787-9s and -10s. The first of four on order arrived in Luanda on February 4.

The global MRO provider will also support TAAG Angolan with an aircraft production inspection programme (APIP) covering all newly-built 787s and Airbus 220s in the fleet. Currently, the APIP comprises four 787s and 15 A220s, with the flexibility to cover additional aircraft as TAAG's fleet develops. Base maintenance is not part of the contract.

Under the TCS, the Luanda-based airline expects to see significant cost benefits through access to Lufthansa Technik's worldwide spares pool. The contract also covers aircraft on the ground (AOG) coverage as well as various parts-pooling and logistics work scopes.

TAAG Angola's chief executive, Nelson Oliveira, said in a statement: “With [Lufthansa Technik's] strong support, we are looking forward to a quick ramp-up of our new 787 and A220 operations. Our partner's reliable component support will ensure a smooth 787 Dreamliner operation from day one.” ▲

▼ For Nigeria, developing a strong local MRO capability is essential as the country looks to expand its aviation sector. ▲

HADIZA USMAN



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L'ÉCOLE SUPÉRIEURE D'AÉRONAUTIQUE DU TOGO DANS UNE CLASSE À PART

L'ESAT Togo University est opérationnelle depuis décembre 2024 et ambitionne de devenir un hub de formation en Afrique subsaharienne. Elle forme des ingénieurs en génie aéronautique et propose des licences et des cours certifiés en informatique et en nouvelles technologies numériques comme le Big Data et l'IA. Un reportage de Anuradha Deenapanray Chappard.

La mission de l'école supérieure de l'aéronautique et des technologies de Togo s'inscrit dans la lignée des recommandations d'ACI Africa, de l'AFRAA et de l'OACI sur la formation.

« L'école a été créée pour former des ingénieurs (de conception et d'exploitation) et des techniciens supérieurs de haut niveau, capables de répondre aux besoins croissants des secteurs de l'aéronautique et des technologies au Togo et à l'international, et trouver des réponses technologiques aux défis de développement de nos pays subsahariens, en tenant compte de nos réalités endogènes », affirme Paul M. Yatoute, co-fondateur et directeur général de l'ESAT-Togo.

L'établissement va élargir son offre de formation en fonction des évolutions technologiques et des besoins du marché. L'ESAT-Togo mise sur une formation pluridisciplinaire. Ainsi, les étudiants qui souhaitent devenir pilotes ou techniciens spécialisés peuvent suivre des cours préparatoires à l'ESAT avant d'intégrer l'Airline Flight Academy (AFA-Togo). Selon Nader Torjemane, expert en aéronautique et directeur de formation des agents techniques d'exploitation, l'AFA-Togo finalise actuellement



Bernadette Kombate:
« Grâce à ESAT-Togo, je fais mes études supérieures en Afrique car nous n'avons pas les moyens d'aller à l'étranger. »
IMAGE: ESAT-TOGO

les procédures requises pour fonctionner en étroite collaboration avec l'université. L'académie proposera aussi une formation pour le personnel navigant sous la direction de Raouf Khelil.

L'ESAT-Togo dont la maison mère est ESAT-Tunisie, s'efforce de développer des partenariats avec des institutions et des entreprises nationales

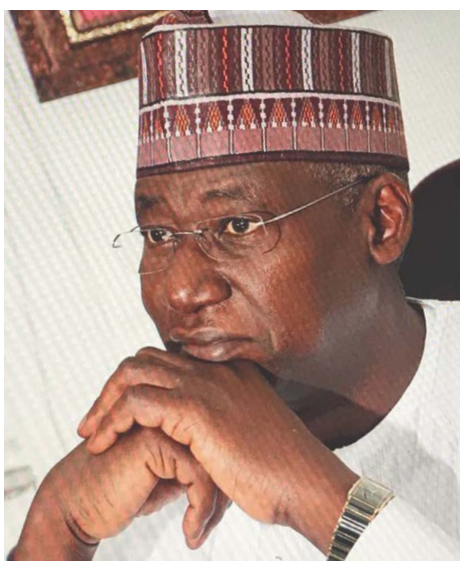
et internationales. Il s'agit de renforcer ses programmes de formation et favoriser l'insertion professionnelle des étudiants.

« Grâce à ESAT-Togo, je fais mes études supérieures en Afrique car nous n'avons pas les moyens d'aller à l'étranger. Nos enseignants sont des professeurs titulaires ou des docteurs qui maximisent en mathématiques et physiques pendant les premiers mois. L'effectif sélectionné permet un suivi personnel même si le rythme est soutenu et le niveau élevé », affirme Bernadette Kombate étudiante en ingénierie Big Data.

Le directeur académique de l'ESAT-Togo, le Professeur Komla Sanda, reste constamment à l'écoute des étudiants.

« J'ai toujours rêvé d'étudier l'aéronautique après mon BAC. Mais il n'y avait pas d'école au Togo ou dans la sous-région. Donc, j'ai dû commencer un autre parcours avant d'intégrer l'ESAT-Togo. J'ai désormais de grandes chances de devenir ingénieur dans cinq ans », explique Kossi Apelete Sokpa, étudiant en ingénierie aéronautique.

« Sous les vagues du changement continue mondiale, nous formons les bâtisseurs qui dessineront le futur monde », souligne le DG Paul M. Yatoute. ▲



Ibrahim Mshelia: A legal framework is necessary.
IMAGE: MISH AVIATION FLYING SCHOOL

WHY IT'S TIME TO GET

Ibrahim Mshelia, chief executive officer of Mish Aviation Flying School in Accra, Ghana, has advised that to resolve the challenges associated with poaching of aviation professionals in Africa and bond contract conflicts involving airline pilots, "the legal framework should sort this out".

"Any pilot who takes a contract and violates it should have his or her licence suspended after thorough investigation," Mshelia said.

He said that Nigeria's aviation minister's recent signing of the practice direction for domesticated Cape Town convention with legal framework completely executed, "has given aircraft lessors more confidence and comfort to deal with Nigerian carriers.

"A similar framework would help to put parties under check. I must add that it is not only the trainee who receives training on bond that usually defaults. The sponsors are also guilty at

times and make the candidate find it convenient to leave. So, it is a two-sided affair even though the candidates' cases are more prevalent. A legal frame work is necessary and this would fix the problem!" he said.

Mshelia added: "The poaching issues have discouraged operators from sponsoring training, but this should be addressed legally such that any candidate jumping a sponsorship contract or an operator acting similarly shall have heavy sanctions as a deterrent.

"This will encourage reintroduction of sponsorship by the airlines and others, thereby reducing the problems drastically. The current trend by both operators and pilots who have abused such agreements have become like a plague in trust between the two.

"The brain drain is not only affecting aviation. As a matter of fact, aviation may be the least



La première promotion d'étudiants à l'ESAT.
IMAGE: ESAT-TOGO

SUMMARY

TOGO HIGHER AERONAUTICS SCHOOL IN A CLASS OF ITS OWN

ESAT Togo University has been operational since December 2024 and aims to become a learning hub in sub-Saharan Africa. It offers degrees in aerospace and computer engineering as well as certified courses in digital technologies like AI and Big Data and cybersecurity.

The mission of the ESAT Togo University is in line with the recommendations of ACI Africa, AFRAA and ICAO on tailoring training and capacity-building.

"The university has been set up to train high-level engineers (design and operations) and senior technicians to meet growing needs in aerospace

and technology sectors in Togo and globally, and the development challenges of sub-Saharan countries, while taking into account our endogenous realities," said Paul M. Yatoute, co-founder and director general of ESAT-Togo.

The university will expand its offer according to technological developments and market needs.

Students who wish to become pilots or specialised technicians can follow preparatory courses at ESAT before joining the Airline Flight Academy (AFA-Togo). According to Nader Torjemane, an aeronautics expert and director of training for technical operating agents, AFA-Togo is

currently finalising the required procedures to operate in close collaboration with the university. The academy will also offer training for flight crews under the direction of Raouf Khelil.

"Thanks to ESAT-Togo, I'm able to do my higher studies in Africa as we don't have the means to go abroad. Our highly-qualified professors lay emphasis on mathematics and physics during the first few months.

"As the intake of students is selective, we benefit from an individual follow-up, even if the pace is sustained and the level is high," says Bernadette Kombate, a student in big data engineering. ▲

TOUGH ON THE PILOT POACHERS

affected, in that only the experienced pilots are able to get jobs in those climes.

"The effect is huge on our system locally because the young graduates cannot readily take up certain positions. With the drain, our airspace will end up with replacement of experienced pilots from foreign countries who will now take charge of our local operators' needs. Usually too, that is more expensive. This is a very bad trend that is going to stagnate, if not stall employment and professional growth of our young processionals.

"This will also eventually cause the unemployed young professionals to seek employment elsewhere where possible or completely disappear from the industry that they once loved or planned for; where they spent some time, resources and energy to acquire their desired skills. Aviation is not a sector that can be ignored at all by any economy.

"We must therefore frown at the trend and I encourage governments across the region to begin to see civil pilot training as a developmental policy, similar to how they train military fighter pilots in preparation for eventualities or conflict.

"For example, during my days at a flying school in Nigeria, 98 per cent of my course mates, including myself, were all sponsored either by airlines, oil services companies, state and federal governments, and so on. Only one or two were privately sponsored. This was a government policy then.

"While the government itself sponsored candidates on merit, they also made it a condition for specific companies involved in high net-worth investments and oil exploration to sponsor candidates for the industry as a development levy.

"This should be encouraged by all regional

governments and taken very seriously as a policy for developing the sector. Incentives should also be provided to operators and sponsors to ensure that the policy is sustained.

"There is a particular need to deliberately encourage local operators with incentives to sponsor and employ from the local market and exhaust it before experts are given opportunities. We cannot allow an important sector of our economy such as aviation to be dominated by expatriates. Our nations should look deeply into a legal framework, which will benefit both sponsors and candidates," said Mshelia.

He said that apart from pilots, Mish aviation would within the next five years, "commence training of aircraft maintenance engineers, flight dispatchers and also, commence air charter services and schedule passenger services in some parts of the region." ▲

Raphael Haddad

Marcelle Nethersole speaks to the president of Jetcraft Commercial.

Can you tell me about Jetcraft Commercial?

Jetcraft Commercial was established in 2015 following a chance meeting between myself and Jahid Fazal-Karim, the owner and chairman of Jetcraft. During our conversation, we agreed to partner and create a new entity within the Jetcraft group to handle commercial aircraft transactions.

Initially, Jetcraft Commercial operated as a broker, facilitating sales and lease transactions for regional, narrowbody, and widebody aircraft. However, we have since evolved into an aircraft trader, allowing us to take greater control over acquisitions, sales, and overall deal structuring.

Today, we support airlines and operators in the fields of buying, selling, leasing, marketing and financing their aircraft.

Tell me about the business you do in Africa.

We are aircraft specialists, focused on buying inventory by taking on the risk associated with acquiring fleets from airlines. We ensure each aircraft meets the necessary economic, technical, and legal conditions before placing it with a new operator. This approach allows us to control inventory, perform maintenance when needed, and act as a bridge between OEMs and airlines.

Africa is a key market for us, with in excess of one third of our commercial aircraft activities focused on the continent.

In 2023, we secured a credit facility from Absa Group Limited to support strategic growth. This financing facility enhances our ability to transition aircraft to end operators, fund fleet acquisitions, and strengthen our market position across Africa and beyond.

“ Strategic partnerships and sustainable financing models will be crucial to aligning fleet growth with market demand. ”

Are there key trends in aircraft trading and demand in Africa?

The African aircraft trading market remains tight due to ongoing supply chain constraints and a shortage of both regional and narrowbody aircraft. Production and delivery delays have led to reduced availability, with lessors having great influence on fleet availability. As a result, airlines are keeping older aircraft in service longer, increasing competition for pre-owned models.

We see strong demand for aircraft such as the DeHavilland Canada Dash 8-400, highlighted by our recent delivery of a Dash 8-400 to Daallo Airlines and other non-disclosed operators in Africa. Other aircraft popular in Africa include the ATR 72 series, Bombardier CRJ200 and CRJ900, and Embraer E170, as airlines seek reliable, efficient solutions to meet operational needs.

Demand for leasing, particularly for narrowbody jets, has surged in recent years, driving up lease rates.

What does Africa need to do in terms of fuelling aviation growth?

Africa's aviation sector is well positioned for growth, however, to support fleet expansion, airlines must strengthen financial planning and operational readiness. Strategic partnerships and sustainable financing models will be crucial to aligning fleet growth with market demand.

Addressing supply chain bottlenecks and securing investment is essential for fleet modernisation, which in turn drives long-term growth. Without these, airlines may struggle to stay competitive. To attract investors, airlines must also strengthen governance and create detailed business plans. Enhancing regulatory frameworks and operational efficiency can further support airline expansion plans.

What are the challenges you face in Africa?

Africa's aviation industry faces significant challenges, including high operational costs, expensive fuel, and heavy taxation. Limited infrastructure and a fragmented intra-African network further hinder growth, while political instability and complex regulations often deter investment. Additionally, many aircraft lessors and financiers perceive African airlines as high-risk, limiting access to affordable capital for fleet modernisation.

To overcome these challenges, greater government investment is needed in infrastructure and regulatory reforms.

What does a typical day involve for you in your role?

Most of my day is spent on conference calls with teams or meeting with customers. These calls cover everything from progress on deals to addressing challenges and aligning on key strategies. I also meet with clients to understand their needs and explore solutions. I travel often to meet with clients and attend conferences.

My role focuses on global procurement and the placement of commercial aircraft, working closely with airlines, OEMs and partners to secure the best terms for our clients. It's a fast-paced job but I love it, balancing strategic planning, collaboration, and client relationships.





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of Southern Africa NPC**

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Clear approach



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