

# AFRICAN AEROSPACE

ISSUE 1, VOLUME 13:  
JANUARY – MARCH  
2025

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THE MAGAZINE FOR AEROSPACE PROFESSIONALS IN AFRICA

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AND HELPING MORE  
AFRICANS TRAVEL BY AIR**

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**AVIATION WEEK NETWORK**

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SE1 8BF, UK  
+44 207 921 5000

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**COVER:**  
Abderahmane Berthe,  
AFRAA secretary general  
IMAGE: AFRAA

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African Aerospace magazine is published in partnership with AFRAA



African Aerospace magazine is published with the support of AfBAA



African Aerospace magazine is published with the support of CAASA

## SAF should be a key part of energy strategy

\$121 million is the estimated annual cost from now until 2050 for Kenya Airways to meet the aviation industry's target for achieving net zero carbon emissions.

This is according to CEO Allan Kilavuka, explaining the East African carrier's journey to net zero to delegates at the AFRAA Annual General Assembly in November. It is a task he readily admits is "very difficult to achieve".

Putting a dollar number on the net zero transition is a bold move from Kenya Airways. It will be a far greater number for larger players such as Ethiopian Airlines and EgyptAir.

The airline's roadmap calculates initiatives such as engine overhaul programmes to enhance efficiency, electrifying ground support equipment, and buying carbon offsets will make up 45 per cent of the \$121 million.

However, Kilavuka is clear that 55 per cent – about \$100 million annually – of the net zero transition cost will be to buy sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). He is also convinced that Kenya Airways must become a catalyst for making SAF a reality in his country.

At the AFRAA meeting he announced that Kenya Airways is partnering with Bleriot Group, a Kenyan firm committed to manufacturing SAF in Africa. Kilavuka's ambitious target is to achieve 10 per cent SAF usage by 2030.

Local SAF production is also on the radar in neighbouring Ethiopia, with Ethiopian Airlines signing an MOU with Satarem America to buy its SAF in August last year. African airlines also talk about a lot about collaborating on SAF, but it is just talk for now.

However, SAF advocates like Kilavuka need help, and that help must come at a national and governmental level as countries define their climate change policies.

The message is that a country that develops an indigenous SAF industry will be better off on many levels.

And it is not about merely making a fuel that has lower emissions than fossil-derived ones. The key point is this move can give a country energy independence and security via a joined-up energy strategy that puts SAF at the centre.

There is a real opportunity for aviation to shift the narrative from its own emissions challenge to help countries achieve what are described by climate strategists as "nature-positive" solutions. This means enhancing the resilience of our planet and societies to halt and reverse nature loss, according to the World Economic Forum.

The aim is to create a SAF supply chain using waste and by-products created locally and turning them into useful biofuels. The spin-off can be nature restoration, job creation – Kilavuka estimates Kenya's SAF industry could employ some 12,000 people – and economic growth. Local SAF production could help reduce national debt by avoiding fuel importation.

Airline leaders in Africa need to corral stakeholders from across the SAF and energy spectrum to advocate this leap of faith from their politicians.

The message is self-serving, but would deliver a huge country service too. That sounds like a classic win-win doesn't it?

Mark Pilling, Managing Editor



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TransVerde plans to use ATR 42 turboprops for its services, as seen in this rendering. IMAGE: TRANSVERDE AIRLINES

## Low-cost start-up to boost tourism in Cabo Verde

A new airline planned for Cabo Verde aims to take advantage of the West African archipelago's booming tourism market. TransVerde Airlines is planned to be a low-cost start-up, that aims initially to create air services in the 10-island archipelago before extending its network to neighbouring West African countries. It is targeting a 2025 launch. TransVerde's founder and president, Rui Lima, believes Cabo Verde is well-placed to take advantage of over-tourism elsewhere in the world, which is driving tourists to seek

new destinations. "But we need to respond quickly – firstly, we need better transport infrastructure to get local people and employees around the islands to ensure a smooth transition of produce and workforce. "We also need to get tourists moving around the islands. At the moment, the big operators send them in, they stay on one island and do not explore or fairly share their holiday spend," Lima said. "Our initial goal is to bridge the islands of Santiago, Sal, and São Vicente before

expanding to include all of Cabo Verde and other West African countries," TransVerde co-founder and board member Vishal Narayanaswamy added. TransVerde is in the process of obtaining its air operator certificate and is seeking \$15 million in equity and debt financing to launch the airline, which is leaning initially towards using three leased ATR 42 turboprops that can undertake multiple daily sectors. "We believe it's essential to compete on frequency, not capacity," said Lima.

### Eyes to lease

Uganda Airlines is looking to lease two Airbus A320neos from June 2025. This will enable it to free up larger Airbus A330-800s to operate its services to Abuja, Nigeria, to better meet strong cargo demand on that route. At present, the carrier is operating its two A330-800s on its Entebbe to Dubai and Mumbai services, but these would be partly replaced by smaller A320s if these can be brought in.

### Airport experience

Cape Town International Airport (CTIA) was honoured with the Airport Experience Award at the Airport Honours Award

ceremony in Amsterdam in November. Mark Maclean, regional general manager of Cluster 2 at Airports Company South Africa (ACSA), said: "We are creating an airport experience that truly reflects a customer-centric culture. I am very proud of our team's continued dedication and of ACSA's role in setting a benchmark in the global aviation industry."

### Gatwick bound

Kenya Airways will fly directly from Nairobi to London Gatwick Airport, its second destination in the UK, from July 2, 2025. The airline will launch three weekly flights to Gatwick, enhancing its London schedule to 10

weekly flights. The route will be operated with the Boeing 787-8.

### Madagascar connects

Madagascar Airlines is partnering with the Travelport group to integrate the global distribution systems Galileo and Travelport in order to enhance its international visibility. Madagascar Airlines CEO, Thierry de Bailleul, said: "This new collaboration underscores Madagascar Airlines commitment to delivering top-tier services while adapting to the demands of international markets. It further supports our mission of enhancing Madagascar's connectivity to the world."



## State-of-the-art airport opens

Ethiopian Airlines Group inaugurated the newly-built Wako Gutu Airport terminal at Bale Robe in January. The new state-of-the-art airport terminal is aimed at advancing the socio-economic and cultural interrelation between the domestic regions and beyond providing seamless domestic air transportation service. Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mesfin Tasew said: "This terminal project brings an enhanced travel experience to our passengers flying to and from this destination. Our commitment to improving the airport experience across our domestic network drives us to invest in upgrades and renovations like this. We take great pride in delivering this state-of-the-art facility and look forward to offering our passengers an elevated level of comfort and convenience."

IMAGE: ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES

IMAGE: EMBRAER



**Embraer sells four A-29 Super Tucanos to customer in Africa**

Embraer has signed a contract for the sale of four A-29 Super Tucano light attack and advanced trainer aircraft to an undisclosed customer in Africa. These aircraft will perform a wide spectrum of missions, such as border surveillance, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), close-air support, counterinsurgency, and advanced flight training. "The A-29 Super Tucano is an extremely versatile aircraft that is able to carry out the most challenging missions under the most demanding conditions. It is the world leader in its category as it combines a combat-proven track record with advanced technology," said Bosco da Costa Junior, president and CEO of Embraer Defense and Security.

**Menzies appointments**

Menzies Aviation has made a series of appointments in Central and East Africa to support the company's strategic growth plans across the region.

The internal appointments include Nouamane Zahouani, who has been promoted to vice president operations for Central and East Africa. He resumes responsibilities for Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.

In Kenya, Mohamed Tambi has been appointed general manager, having most recently served as general manager for Mozambique, while Mary Efata becomes general manager for Uganda.

**Africa expansion**

Private jet charter VistaJet has expanded into East and Southern Africa, targeting high-net-worth individuals (UHNWIs), corporations, and governments.

The move follows a successful West Africa roadshow earlier this year.

"Private aviation plays a pivotal role in empowering corporations and governments across Africa," said Philippe Scalabrini, president of Europe and Africa at VistaJet. "As the region experiences unparalleled economic growth, we are committed to offering best-in-class solutions that ensure efficiency, safety, and reliability."

**Serving Namibia**

FlyAngola launched its first international route from Benguela (Catumbela airport) to Windhoek, Namibia, on December 21, 2024.

This new connection will be operated three times a week, with direct and non-stop flights, providing a journey of just two hours between the two cities.

"These new flights will revolutionise mobility throughout the region –



IMAGE: AIR CONGO

**Ethiopian Airlines partners with DRC to launch Air Congo**

Ethiopian Airlines has partnered with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) for the establishment of Air Congo.

The DRC government will hold a 51 per cent majority stake, while Ethiopian Airlines will retain 49 per cent share, and manage the airline.

Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mesfin Tasew said: "The launch of Air Congo is a significant step in our strategic plan to collaborate with African governments and enhance air transport across the continent."

"This partnership will provide greater connectivity for the DRC and central Africa, facilitating investment, trade, and tourism, thereby contributing to socio-economic growth of the region."

"We extend our heartfelt thanks to the DRC government, all stakeholders, and my esteemed colleagues for their commitment and collaboration in making this partnership a success."

whether for business, health, leisure or visiting friends and family – and will certainly bring tourists from the Namibian capital to the most beautiful warm water beaches in the province of Benguela," said Belarnicio Muangala, CEO of FlyAngola.

**Airline of the Year**

Ethiopian Airlines was awarded "Airline of the Year – Global Operations" at the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) 56th Annual General Assembly and Summit in November.

Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mesfin Tasew received the award and said: "Receiving the Airline of the Year – Global Operations award from AFRAA is not merely an accolade; it is a powerful affirmation of the commitment and resilience of our team. This award mirrors our unwavering mission to enhance Africa's connectivity and fuel economic growth."



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### Airlink CEO Rodger Foster to step down

Airlink CEO and managing director Rodger Foster is set to step down from its helm at the end of March 2025.

Airlink's current chief financial officer, de Villiers Engelbrecht, will take over from Foster as the company's new CEO with effect from April 1 2025.

Foster will remain a shareholder in the airline and will continue serving as a non-executive director.

"It has been a privilege to have led Airlink through what has been an exciting, at times very challenging, but ultimately a rewarding and fulfilling journey.

"However, after more than three decades in the post, it is time to hand over the flight controls to my successor and our chief financial officer, de Villiers Engelbrecht," said Foster.

### Top rank for Kenya

Kenya Airways was ranked as the best African airline for customer service and on-time performance in December by Air Help, a leading global air passenger rights advocate.



### Youth programme sparks Africa's next generation of high flyers

In an initiative to nurture Africa's future aviation professionals, a youth programme was launched last November as a collaborative effort between African Airlines Association (AFRAA), the African Section of the Ninety-Nines, EgyptAir, and the Egyptian Ministry of Civil Aviation.

The event, held in Cairo, brought together 50 bright young girls for an immersive experience designed to spark their interest in aviation.

The school that participated is the Al-Asmarat Compound Mokattam, which is built by The Tahya Misr Fund, an initiative launched by president Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi after he became president in 2014.

His goal for the fund was to be able to service the poor, the sick and marginalised people in Egyptian society with donations from Egyptians and businesses.

"This achievement is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and passion of our entire team," said Allan Kilavuka, CEO of Kenya Airways.

### Ethiopian graduates

Ethiopian Aviation University graduated more than 460 aviation professionals, including international trainees from

10 African countries, in December 2024.

During a ceremony, the university honoured the accomplishments of 132 pilots, 128 commercial trainees, 123 cabin crew, and 84 aircraft maintenance technicians.

Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mesfin Tasew said: "As a Pan-African airline and the continent's aviation giant, it

is also a pleasure to extend our aviation training to other African nations and take a step further in realising a well-connected Africa, where well-trained professionals support the industry."

### Technical services

TAAG and Lufthansa Technik recently signed a long-term agreement to

The first day of the programme took place at EgyptAir's headquarters, where participants were introduced to the airline's history and technical expertise.

The second day they delved into the technical and operational facets of aviation at the Egyptian Aviation Academy – including being able to experience what it feels like to control an aircraft in a highly-realistic simulator environment.

Dina Dawod, vice governor African Section Ninety Nines, said: "As Africa's aviation industry is poised for significant growth, youth outreach programmes like this play a pivotal role in addressing the impending skills gap.

"By 2030, the sector is expected to face a shortfall of skilled professionals across various aviation disciplines. Initiatives like this one ignite a passion for aviation in young minds, providing them with a clearer pathway to careers in the industry."

provide technical services for the aircraft components of the Angolan flag carrier's new Boeing 787 long-haul fleet.

Starting with the arrival of the first aircraft in February 2025 and lasting twelve years, TAAG's Boeing 787-9 and 787-10 will benefit from Total Component Support) from the maintenance, repair and overhaul specialist.

### Fastjet Zimbabwe achieves IATA's operational safety audit registration

Fastjet Zimbabwe has successfully achieved the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) operational safety audit (IOSA) registration. Fastjet Zimbabwe has been working towards this registration as part of its vision to achieve international recognition in upholding globally recognised safety and quality standards.

Nunurai Ndawana, spokesperson for fastjet Zimbabwe, said: "Obtaining the IOSA registration is a significant milestone for our company, which is a testament of our commitment to safety and continuous improvement of our operations.

"We take great pride in our team, whose expertise and relentless effort have allowed us to meet the rigorous requirements set by IOSA."



IMAGE: AFRAA

IMAGE: FASTJET ZIMBABWE



# THE VOICE OF AFRICA

*Abderahmane Berthe, secretary general of the African Airlines Association, AFRAA, discusses how his body is helping the development of air transport in Africa with Mark Pilling.*

**N**othing seems to faze Abderahmane Berthe. Born in the West African country of Mali, and with a higher education that includes France's famous Ecole Nationale de l'Aviation Civile in Toulouse, Berthe is taking everything in his stride as he oversees AFRAA's 56th Annual General Assembly (AGA) and Summit in Cairo, hosted by EgyptAir, in November.

This affable Malian, who was appointed to lead AFRAA in 2018, takes this responsibility with an easy smile.

At least on the outside, for the annual assembly is most stressful point of the calendar for leaders of airline associations as they gather their members and partners to demonstrate the actions and effectiveness of the secretariat, provide a platform to debate the issues of the day

and gain a mandate for coming years from the airline bosses they represent.

Get it wrong and the airline CEOs that demand strong leadership soon act.

Representing Africa's airlines across this continent, not only to collect and present the views of diverse and numerous players, but navigate a complex and ever-changing raft of governments, is an unforgiving task. It is one where Berthe believes he has raised AFRAA's voice.

"This is one of the achievements because AFRAA was kind of absent on the scene in Africa," he said. That has changed. "Currently all the industry, all stakeholders know about AFRAA, because we are attending meetings, even technical ones. We are giving our position and sometimes this position may be against what states want to implement."

“What I want to achieve is to improve intra-African connectivity. This takes not only AFRAA, but many other stakeholders.”

**ABDERAHMANE BERTHE**

He points to the example of a directive to introduce ADS-B surveillance and navigation technology in Africa by 2028, which will cost carriers \$150,000 per aircraft to retrofit the avionics to comply. "We have been asking for more time because many of our member airlines are not economically sustainable yet," said Berthe.

AFRAA's case has in principle been accepted, he said. "This is an example where our voice is very important not only to protect, but to make sure that the situation of our members is considered when decisions are being taken."

**SURPRISE APPOINTMENT**

Berthe was not looking to lead AFRAA when the time came in 2018 to recruit a new association head. With two stints as the CEO of Air Mali for 12 years and latterly four years at the helm of Air Burkina, he was one of the AFRAA board members giving guidance to recruiters about what candidates needed to do the job.

When discussing AFRAA and role of the secretary general with an executive search firm, Berthe's clear vision during this conversation led the head-hunter to ask if he had considered applying.

There were changes ahead for Air Burkina and while he had not considered the job for himself, Berthe reflected positively on the possibility of a new experience adding to that of his years as an airline CEO and the opportunity "to push the agenda at a continent level".

Berthe first move was to recruit new members to the AFRAA team and establish a vision for the association with actions attached. "I said to lead an organisation like AFRAA you need to have a strategic plan, and there wasn't one before."

As soon as this was agreed by the board, for 2021-2015, the pandemic struck, sending the industry into crisis-management mode. This delayed the implementation of the strategy for a couple of years, but Berthe can now list a string of initiatives that AFRAA is pursuing, often with partners such as IATA, ACI and CANSO and others.

Early moves included the establishment of a data and analysis unit in 2019 so that AFRAA could present accurate and timely information on its member activities while it also put in place a consulting unit.

Berthe is particularly proud of AFRAA's work

to advance the introduction of Free Route Airspace in parts of Africa, with the target to start by the end of 2025. This is a specified airspace within which users may freely plan a route between a defined entry point and a defined exit point enabling more direct routings.

"The expected impact on the operational costs is massive along with carbon dioxide emissions reduction," said Berthe.

**SAFETY FOCUS**

"Safety is always a priority," said Berthe, in his annual address at the AFRAA AGA, and safety standards have improved as Africa's accident rate has fallen over the past two years. However, from January to May 2024 there were eight runway excursions across Africa which is a cause for concern. These incidents were mainly caused by unbalanced approaches, poor weather and cross winds.

Keeping safety at the top of the agenda is a constant theme in AFRAA's work. "One thing I'm especially proud of is AFRAA's inaugural African Aviation Safety and Operations Summit, which we started this year," he noted.

□□□□□

The kick-off event, in partnership with the Flight Safety Foundation, took place in May in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia with the aim to promote and enhance the safety level in the region and share operational best practices.

Elsewhere on the safety front AFRAA has used its consulting expertise to assist start-up carrier Eswatini Air prepare for its first IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA), explained Berthe. AFRAA has also worked with IATA and the African Development Bank (AfDB) to enhance safety in Africa helping four other carriers achieve IOSA with more in the pipeline.

**ACCESS TO FINANCE**

Collaboration with the AfDB has extended to the important topic of helping African airlines access financing. "You can imagine it is much easier for airlines like Ethiopian or EgyptAir to get funds, but for the small and medium-sized African airlines it is very challenging," he noted.

"In early 2025 we are organising a workshop in Nairobi to explain to members on how to prepare an airline to be eligible for financing by the bank. This is very important," said Berthe.

**Continued on Page 12** ▶

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

AFRAA is partnering with the Afreximbank to develop an e-learning portal and courses for aviation. “Training a new generation of aviation professionals for Africa is very important because traffic will double – we need human resources,” he stated. This initiative should begin in 2025.

This portal is one in a lengthy list of tools and products AFRAA has developed, mostly with partners, to assist its members. Another in the works is a distribution and settlement project, he explained.

Top of the list of AFRAA’s product initiatives is the Route Intelligence Portal with an updated version of this tool, which aims to give members data-driven information on network development, launched in Cairo.

**HIGH COSTS**

Berthe does not hesitate when asked about what has been one of the hardest battles he has been fighting during his time at AFRAA. “My biggest frustration is the cost environment. It keeps going up. Governments are adding taxes, not taking into consideration user needs and pushing airfares higher,” he noted.

During an airline C-suite panel at AFRAA, George Uriesi, chief operating officer at Nigeria carrier Ibom Air gave a perfect example. “My airline started going to Accra from Lagos about a year ago,” he said. “When we got to pricing our product on that route, we suddenly discovered that a return flight costs \$222 in charges for one passenger. You haven’t even put on your price yet, or accounted for landing fees, ground handling etc.”

This is not a one-off in Africa, and such high charges put up barriers to Africans being able to afford air travel. “If you consider GDP per capita in Africa it is low, just 15 per cent of the global average. With high costs and high-ticket prices how can African citizens travel by air? It becomes very difficult,” said Berthe.

It is a topic AFRAA and IATA have been lobbying on and “slowly, slowly, some states are making decisions,” he said. In October, AFRAA attended a ministerial level meeting of the ECOWAS states to put the case for lower charges and taxes. ECOWAS is the Economic Community of West African States made up of 15 countries

“I hope that they will scrap some of the taxes which are not used for aviation development in Africa,” he stated.

If it goes the industry’s way it will be a milestone achievement. “It is important, because if we can reach this kind of decision in the ECOWAS region maybe we can replicate it in other regions, like the central region, and bring down fares.”

**AFRICA RECOVERS**

“The industry has not only recovered from the disruptions caused by the pandemic, but has also shown significant growth with many African carriers surpassing pre-pandemic operating levels,” said Berthe in his state of the industry address to the AFRAA assembly.

Overall, African traffic is forecast to rise to 98 million passengers this year, up from 85 million in 2023, and above the 95.6 million carried in 2019.

However, while Africa reached 2019 traffic levels in 2024, it represents at 2.1 per cent just a fraction of global air traffic. This is tiny compared to African nations making up 18.3 per cent of the world’s population.

“Our vision of a liberalised sky for Africa is an ongoing progress. Barriers to intra-African aviation are gradually diminishing, and this momentum should be amplified to create opportunities for airlines and businesses, trade, tourism and regional integration.”

AFRAA is beginning the work to formulate its next five-year strategic plan, which will run from 2026 to 2030, which will hopefully take place as SAATM begins to be implemented for real.

Berthe will lead the definition of AFRAA’s plan and see at least two years of its implementation as his contract term runs until the end of 2027.

Berthe echoes the words of Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mesfin Tasew at AFRAA who stated that sustainability for African carriers means not

only the mission to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, but social and economic sustainability too.

But does Africa have the chance to establish its own sustainable aviation fuel industry? “We have the raw material feedstocks for SAF, but the question is transferring the technology and the cost,” said Berthe.

“What I know is there are six pilot countries – Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Cameroon and Nigeria – where they are getting assistance at international level to see how they can produce SAF,” he said.

“If SAF can help to reduce fuel costs for African airlines, it will be very good. However, so far, SAF is very expensive compared to fossil fuel and we don’t want in the future to see African countries importing SAF or Africa becoming only a source of feedstock for SAF.”

The list of actions and initiatives on Berthe and AFRAA’s plate is long and ever growing.

At the AFRAA assembly he concluded his state of the industry address like this: “The African continent has focused on aviation as a critical driver of socio-economic development. co-operation, collaboration and joint industry actions are essential in this process. AFRAA intends to be pivotal in navigating African airlines with specific support initiatives.”

AFRAA’s slogan is “better skies for Africa” and the Association’s vision is: “A sustainable, interconnected, and affordable air transport industry in Africa where our airlines drive economic development”.

Achieving this is a gradual, often slow and sometimes painful process. That goes with the territory as the saying goes, which Berthe understands very well.

It is his intention to keep on track and keep on speaking out for Africa. ▲



Platinum sponsor: EgyptAir Chairman Yehia Zakaria is presented with a commemorative plaque by AFRAA’s Abderahmane Berthe and Maureen Kahonge. IMAGE: AFRAA

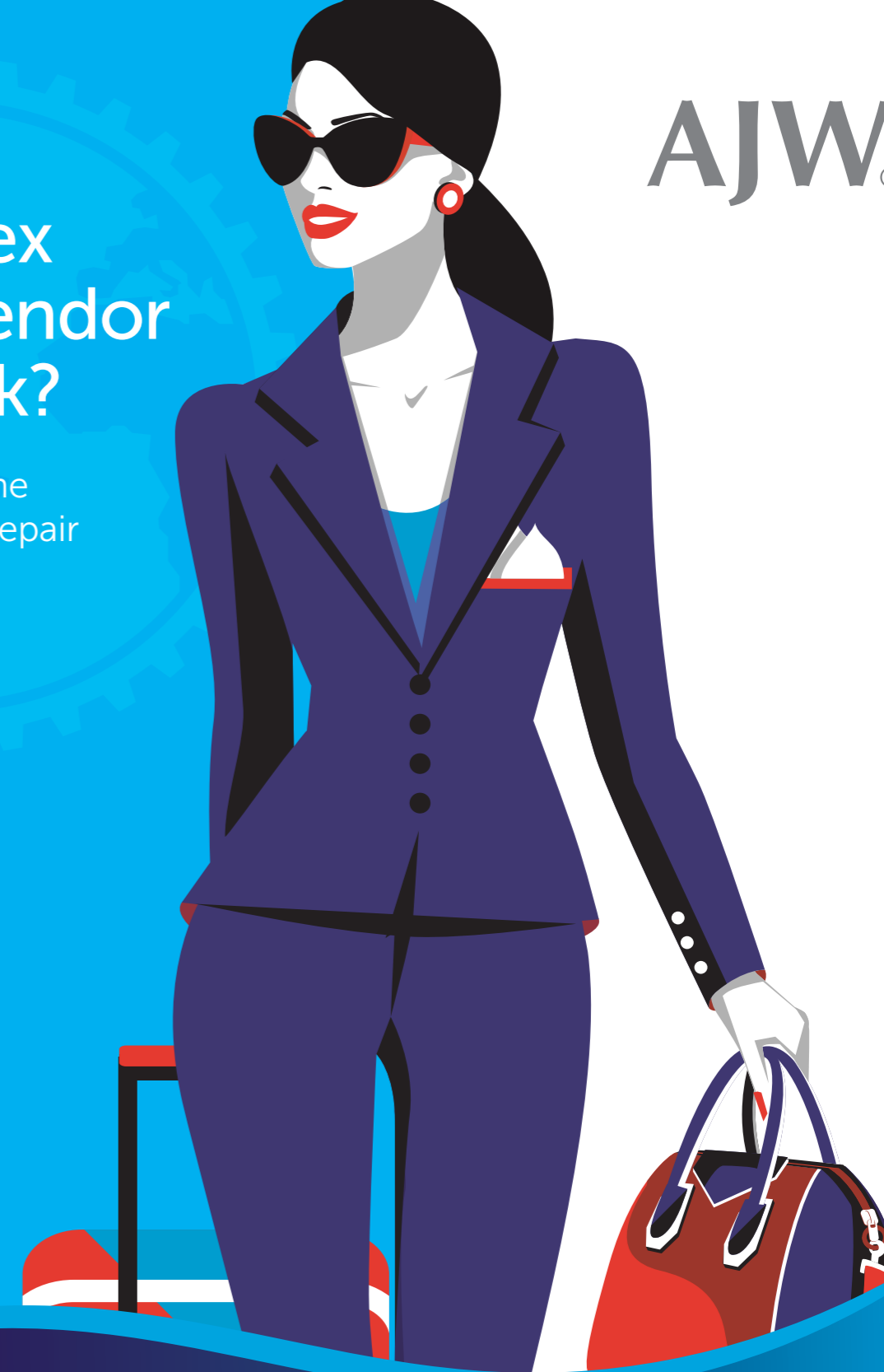
The strategic pillars of safety and sustainability are key to AFRAA’s work, but Berthe’s big target is helping more African’s travel by air. “What I want to achieve is to improve intra-African connectivity. This takes not only AFRAA, but many other stakeholders – airlines, authorities and airports working on the project of developing new routes in Africa.”

A key element of enhancing connectivity will be the arrival of open skies in Africa, as promised by the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM).

According to Berthe: “Our progress in enhancing connectivity across Africa through initiatives like SAATM is starting slowly to yield a result. More countries committed to SAATM are progressively complying with the provisions of the Yamoussoukro Declaration [a declaration made in 1988 on a New African Air Transport Policy].

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Ethiopian Airlines took delivery of its first Airbus A350-1000 in Toulouse in early November heralding a new chapter in the carrier's growth story. **Mark Pilling** reports.

## Ethiopian's breath of fresh Airbus

Ethiopian Airlines has taken delivery of the first of four 395-seat Airbus A350-1000s, with the carrier urgently needing the largest member of the A350 widebody family to offer additional capacity on popular routes that connect London Heathrow, Frankfurt and Washington DC to Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.

"We are here to celebrate this monumental occasion in the history of Ethiopian Airlines and the African aviation industry," said Mesfin Tasew, group CEO of the carrier, speaking at the Airbus aircraft delivery centre in Toulouse.

Ethiopia's government, which is the sole owner of Ethiopian Airlines, is committed to the success of the carrier as it aims to "connect Africa to the world" and "support the continent's economic growth", said Yilma Merdasa, chairman of the airline's management board and chief of the country's air force, who attended the delivery event.

Ethiopian took delivery of its first A350, the smaller -900 version that it operates with 343 seats, in June 2016, said Tasew.

The airline now operates 20 A350-900s and will take delivery of a further 11 of this type from 2027. The A350-1000 twinjet is powered by the Rolls-Royce XWB-97 engine, which is the sole engine option for the A350 family.

While the A350-900 has become "a core fleet" for Ethiopian with "outstanding reliability and performance" the extra 16 business class seats offered on the A350-1000, with 46 in total, is a "step change" compared to the 30 available on the smaller -900, said Tasew.

Ethiopian is taking delivery of four A350-1000s, with the second arriving in the first week of December, another in the third week of that month and the final one in March 2025, Tasew told *African Aerospace*.

The first A350-1000 will be operated to eight destinations across Ethiopian's network in a promotion move until the carrier receives its second one when both will be dedicated to serving its Washington DC route.



On this route, plus Heathrow and Frankfurt, the larger business class cabin is required to meet demand as the carrier's premium product is often fully booked, he explained.

Additionally, the A350-1000 will be especially vital at slot-constrained airports like London Heathrow with 11 per cent more capacity compared with the A350-900, said Tasew.

The A350-1000 also brings other important improvements over the airline's existing fleet such as the



Ethiopian Group CEO Mesfin Tasew (centre) signed for his airline's new A350-1000 at the delivery celebration with Wouter Van Wersch, Executive Vice-President International of Airbus (left) and Dimitri Mega, Vice-President Customer Operations of Rolls-Royce. IMAGE: MARK PILLING. Left: The Airbus A350-1000. IMAGE: ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES



latest in-flight entertainment system, supplied by Thales, and the aircraft's innovative lighting system.

"This will enhance and elevate our level of service for customers, while also providing a "competitive edge" over its rivals, said Tasew. "We are setting a new benchmark for the aviation industry in Africa."

The airline is also preparing to order up to 10 firm aircraft in the 100-seater category in the coming eight months with the Airbus A220 and Embraer E2 family in the running and has a widebody freighter order competition under way as well.

Ethiopian also has a further 11 A350-900 outstanding orders to add to the 20 aircraft already operating with the airline, however these are to be delivered from 2027, he said.

This leaves a gap. "This gap is not OK to sustain our growth strategy. We need new aircraft every year, both in the wide and narrow-body category," explained Tasew. "We need a minimum of four to six widebodies and six to seven narrowbodies" and it is looking to the leasing market to bring more aircraft in, he said. ▲

# LA COMPAGNIE AÉRIENNE FLY GABON PREND SON ENVOL

Une étape majeure a été franchie dans l'histoire du transport aérien au Gabon. La nouvelle compagnie aérienne nationale, Fly Gabon, a débuté ses opérations avec son premier vol commercial le 31 août dernier. Un reportage d'Anuradha Deenapanray Chappard.

Afrijet et Fly Gabon portent aujourd'hui les ambitions nationales du transport aérien au Gabon. L'été dernier, la République gabonaise avait réalisé une opération de prise de participation au sein de la compagnie aérienne privée Afrijet via une nouvelle holding. Cette décision répondait à des objectifs stratégiques et visait également à mutualiser les savoir-faire et les compétences du pays pour bâtir une nouvelle compagnie nationale : Fly Gabon.

« Accueillir l'État et en devenir le porte-drapeau consiste à aligner les stratégies de développement du pays et de l'entreprise. Nous comptons pouvoir réduire nos coûts, et, par là-même, nos prix, sans perdre l'ADN de la gestion privée de la compagnie aérienne », avait déclaré à *African Aerospace* Marc Gaffajoli, aujourd'hui président du conseil d'administration de la nouvelle structure étatique.

Fly Gabon a pris son envol officiellement l'été dernier. La nouvelle compagnie gabonaise se concentre dans un premier temps sur les dessertes domestiques pour connecter les neuf provinces du pays. Elle dispose pour cela d'une flotte de deux ATR.



The Inauguration of Fly Gabon. IMAGE: PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE DU GABON.

Fly Gabon a pour ambition de développer une mobilité régionale abordable à travers le pays et de stimuler les échanges économiques. Ainsi, l'état gabonais a entrepris un plan ambitieux de modernisation de ses aéroports de province.

En septembre dernier, Afrijet a signé avec ATR une commande ferme pour un ATR 42-600 (avec une option pour un autre avion). Il remplacera un ATR42-500. Le premier appareil sera livré en 2025 et rejoindra la flotte de Fly Gabon.

Les avions à turbopropulseur ATR jouent un rôle décisif au niveau de la connectivité, offrant à

la population gabonaise un moyen de transport rapide, fiable et économique.

« Fly Gabon marque ainsi une nouvelle étape avec une flotte d'avions adaptée pour répondre aux spécificités du trafic de passagers et aux infrastructures aéroportuaires de province », a souligné Nyl Moret-Mba, directeur général d'Afrijet lors de la signature de l'accord.

« Alors que nous renforçons un partenariat déjà fructueux avec Afrijet, nous sommes honorés de soutenir le lancement de Fly Gabon. La combinaison des ATR42 et ATR72 offrira à Fly Gabon une flexibilité maximale pour des opérations efficaces sur le long terme », a ajouté Alexis Vidal, directeur commercial d'ATR.

Fly Gabon souhaite également étendre ses activités en Afrique en 2025 avec comme première destination, l'Afrique du Sud. Cette route est importante car elle favorisera le commerce et les échanges notamment pour les industries minières et pétrolières. La compagnie nationale gabonaise a, à cet égard, réceptionné en octobre dernier, son premier Airbus A320-232 en leasing.

Le Gabon a également pour ambition de changer de dimension avec des dessertes à l'internationale pour ces deux porte-drapeaux. Durant ces dernières années, Afrijet avait développé un partenariat novateur avec La Compagnie, un opérateur français 100% Smart Business Class. Elle assurait une nouvelle route Paris-Libreville.

Soulignons qu'Air France & Afrijet ont signé en mars 2024 un accord de coopération

commerciale (Interligne) positionnant l'aéroport de Libreville comme une plateforme de correspondance en Afrique Centrale. L'objectif est d'augmenter la connectivité régionale et internationale du Gabon, et de faciliter l'expérience des clients des deux compagnies aériennes.

Le président de la Transition du Gabon Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema et Wouter Van Wersch, président international d'Airbus se sont rencontrés lors du 19ème sommet de la francophonie à Paris.

Cette audience a été l'occasion pour le constructeur européen de réaffirmer sa volonté de soutenir la stratégie d'expansion du transport aérien du Gabon. Airbus est prêt à développer des partenariats et à mettre à disposition de Fly Gabon des avions comme l'A320 XLR capables de desservir des destinations internationales, dont Paris, pour consolider les liaisons entre le Gabon et la France.

## SUMMARY

### AFRIJET HELPS FLY THE NATIONAL FLAG IN GABON

A major milestone has been reached in the history of air transport in the Central African country of Gabon as the new national airline, Fly Gabon, began operations on 31 August.

Privately-owned Afrijet is now flying the national flag in Gabon following last summer's stake acquisition by the Gabonese Republic, via a new holding company. This decision met strategic objectives and also aimed to pool the country's commercial aviation know-how and skills to build the new national airline: Fly Gabon.

"Welcoming the State and becoming its standard-bearer means aligning the development strategies of the country and the company. We intend to be able to reduce costs, and therefore prices, without losing the DNA of the private management of the airline," said Marc Gaffajoli, chairman of the new state company.

Fly Gabon was launched last summer and the new Gabonese company is initially focusing on domestic services to connect the country's nine provinces with its fleet of two ATRs.

The new airline aims to develop affordable regional mobility across the Atlantic coastal equatorial country

and to stimulate the regional economy. To this end, the Gabonese government has undertaken an ambitious plan to modernise its provincial airports.

Last September, Afrijet signed a firm order with ATR for an ATR 42-600 (with an option for another aircraft) that will replace an ATR42-500. The first aircraft will be delivered in 2025 and will join Fly Gabon's fleet.

"So Fly Gabon is marking a new milestone with a fleet of aircraft adapted to meet the needs of passenger traffic and provincial airport infrastructures," explained Nyl Moret-Mba, CEO of Afrijet during the signing of the agreement.

"As we strengthen an already successful partnership with Afrijet, we are honoured to support the launch of Fly Gabon. The combination of the ATR42 and ATR72 will provide Fly Gabon with maximum flexibility for efficient operations in the long term," added Alexis Vidal, commercial director of ATR.

Fly Gabon also hopes to expand its international flights in 2025 with South Africa as its first destination, and to achieve this the Gabonese national airline received its first Airbus A320-232 on lease in October. ▲



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# EXSEYCHELLENT!

*Air Seychelles has transformed its net asset position from negative to positive since 2022. The national flag's USD 7 million profit for 2023 reflects its commitment to sustainable growth and operational excellence, says CEO Sandy Benoiton proudly.*

**Anuradha Deenapanray Chappard** reports.

This achievement marks, not only a successful continuation of its turnaround journey initiated in 2022, but also signals a strong revival. It also marks a second consecutive profitable year for the airline. These figures showcase the airline's dedication to outperforming set objectives and delivering exceptional results to stakeholders.

The main force of Air Seychelles is its team spirit, from top management to new recruits. The unwavering dedication and smartness of each member of its staff explains this success story.

"Your professionalism, creativity, and teamwork have driven our success and exceeded our expectations, demonstrating once again that our people are our greatest asset. As we move forward, Air Seychelles remains dedicated to excellence, growth, and resilience, securing a bright and prosperous future for our company and stakeholders," avows Sandy Benoiton, CEO of Air Seychelles.

Despite challenges, such as the suspension of flights to Tel Aviv due to the conflict in Israel since 13 October 2023, which resulted in a revenue loss of USD 2.1 million for 2023, Air Seychelles managed to increase revenues by USD 2.8 million, partly due to the launch of the Colombo route.



Furthermore, the national airline has continued to lease out one Airbus A320 NEO of its fleet on wet-lease (ACMI) operations during 2023, with the other A320 NEO operating the regional network. The resilience demonstrated by the airline amid these trying circumstances highlights its strategic initiatives and adaptability within the competitive aviation market.

To manage its financial health, Air Seychelles has diligently focused on debt reduction. It has paid down USD 4.9 million of its bank loan with Nouvobanq, hence reducing its outstanding loan balance from an initial sum of USD 16.5 million to USD 11.6 million by August 2024. Air Seychelles has also completely

▼ **Air Seychelles has made significant strides in addressing maintenance cost escalations.** ▲  
**SANDY BENOITON**



paid off its lease deferral debt of USD 4.5 million, incurred during the Covid pandemic.

According to Sandy Benoiton, as part of its ongoing strategy to navigate the complexities of the aviation industry, Air Seychelles "has made significant strides in addressing maintenance cost escalations", particularly concerning its Airbus A320 NEO engine fleet. In 2023, the airline took proactive measures by establishing a conservative annual accounting provision of USD 2.5 million dedicated specifically to cover potential return conditions for the aircraft and its engines.

"This foresight not only highlights Air Seychelles' commitment to financial transparency but also stabilises future profit expectations, ensuring robust financial health for the airline. As the airline looks forward to the future, it remains dedicated to delivering exemplary service, fostering innovation and achieving sustainable growth."



Air Seychelles has consolidated its connectivity with seasonal flights to La Réunion as from end-December, 2024 in collaboration with Tourism Seychelles. Weekly direct flights to Roland Garros Airport are scheduled throughout January 2025 with a technical stop in Mauritius.

Benoiton says that Air Seychelles has built "on the positive response received upon announcing the signing of the SPA agreement with Air Austral and the succeeding meetings with the travel trade in Reunion" to offer a hassle-free journey to visitors especially during the end of year festivities.

As Bernadette Willemin, director general for destination marketing at Tourism Seychelles rightly puts forth, "this strategic initiative" reinforces the archipelago's position "as a premier tourism destination in the Indian Ocean region".

Air Seychelles has also signed a new code-sharing partnership with Sri Lankan Airlines to expand the number of destinations accessible to customers flying between Mahe and Colombo.

In its search of excellence, Air Seychelles has also entered into a partnership with ExecuJet, a leading global business aviation company, to provide exclusive VIP fixed-base operator (FBO) premium services in the Seychelles.

ExecuJet vice president Africa, Gavin Kiggen, thus guarantees "unmatched FBO services that cater to the needs of high-profile travellers visiting the Seychelles". ▲

Africa can realise enormous economic and social benefits if it embraces liberalisation of the air cargo sector, argues **Sanjeev Gadhia**, secretary general of The International Air Cargo Association and Astral Aviation CEO.

# TEMPTING FREIGHT...



▼ African airlines have a unique opportunity to expand their operations by investing in freighters and smart infrastructure. ▲  
**SANJEEV GADHIA**

The air cargo sector in Africa is poised for transformative growth, with projections suggesting it could reach a total value of \$5 billion by 2025, said Gadhia, during his address to delegates at Aviation Africa 2024 in Johannesburg in September.

This growth is driven by rising trade volumes, particularly with Europe and Asia, and significant improvements in logistics capabilities across the continent. However, realising this potential requires addressing several persistent challenges while capitalising on the immense opportunities that lie ahead.

The African air cargo industry presents immense prospects, particularly in the transportation of perishables, e-commerce goods, and medical products, including pharmaceuticals and vaccines.

With a growing demand for rapid and efficient logistics, African airlines have a unique opportunity to expand their operations by investing in freighters and smart infrastructure. These advancements are essential for handling specialised cargo and ensuring seamless transportation across the continent.



Two key frameworks — the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) — have the potential to revolutionise intra-African trade and air cargo connectivity. Ratification of these frameworks will foster liberalisation, enabling African airlines to scale up their operations through

improved connectivity, growth, and collaboration within the continent's network.

With the implementation of SAATM, the aviation sector's role as an economic driver is expected to expand significantly, stimulating trade, investment, and employment. By fostering partnerships and cooperation among African carriers, SAATM can create an environment where airlines work collectively to strengthen intra-African trade and connectivity.

■ **Challenges Confronting the Industry:**

Despite its promising outlook, Africa's air cargo sector faces several barriers that must be overcome to unlock its full potential:

■ **High Operational Costs:**

Jet fuel prices, cargo handling fees, freight taxes, and royalties drive up costs, placing African airlines at a competitive disadvantage.

■ **Regulatory Constraints:**

Protectionist policies, restrictions on traffic rights, and favouritism towards foreign carriers stifle the growth of African airlines. These limitations hinder the liberalisation of air transport, which is crucial for unlocking new opportunities.

■ **Connectivity Issues:**

A lack of intra-African connectivity forces cargo to be routed through the Middle East and Europe, increasing transit times and costs. Furthermore, insufficient collaboration among African airlines hampers network development.

■ **Inadequate Infrastructure:**

Many African airports lack basic infrastructure such as modern terminals, parking, and air cargo handling facilities. Encouraging private-sector investments through public-private partnerships (PPPs) is essential to address these deficiencies.

■ **Dominance of Foreign Carriers:**

Foreign airlines dominate 80 per cent of Africa's air cargo market and are granted favourable traffic rights, often sidelining African carriers. This dynamic limits the competitiveness of local players.

■ **The Path Forward:**

Aviation holds immense potential to drive Africa's economic growth and development. However, fully leveraging this potential requires embracing liberalisation through the SAATM and AfCFTA frameworks. By reducing costs, improving connectivity, and fostering cooperation among African carriers, the continent can unlock new growth avenues.

Collaboration is key. African airlines must embrace partnerships and work collectively to strengthen their presence in the global air cargo market. Through coordinated efforts, investment in infrastructure, and regulatory reform, Africa can establish itself as a formidable player in the global logistics landscape.

The future of Africa's air cargo industry is bright, but its success depends on bold actions to overcome challenges and seize emerging opportunities. In doing so, the aviation sector can propel the continent towards greater economic integration and prosperity. ▲

One of the many challenges faced by African airlines is access to cost-effective finance. Mark Tierney (right) has an innovative proposal, as **Guy Leitch** discovered.



# The CAFE that serves solutions

Airlines are notoriously capital intensive, yet the cost of capital and its availability are a serious impediment to airline growth in Africa.

One of the primary problems faced by African airlines in their quest for aircraft finance is that almost all the airlines cannot operate profitably, and thus have weak sustainability, which makes them poor finance risks.

Mark Tierney, the CEO of Crabtree Capital based in Dublin, makes five points about the current status of the African airline industry:

■ The industry is unable to perform the 'utility' function,

■ The inadequacy of current African air connectivity is extremely costly in terms of foregone economic growth,

■ It is both unreasonable and irrational to expect airline managers — answerable to their boards and shareholders — to fix the 'system' themselves,

■ Current policy and practice result in the continued fragmentation of a relatively small market, making rationalisation ever less realisable,

■ Without sustained commitment to achieving both better economies of density and of scale, unit costs will remain high. High unit costs (which have many causes) result in high ticket prices (especially intra-Africa).

To address these challenges, Tierney has proposed a "Commercial Aircraft Finance Enterprise (CAFE)". This would be a public private partnership (PPP) for a commercial aircraft finance enterprise for Africa.



The unique objective of CAFE is: "To motivate African airline shareholders and management to change their behaviour for the better. The new aircraft finance enterprise would be funded jointly by multilateral development banks (MDBs) (such as the Afreximbank), development finance institutions (DFIs) and the private sector," Tierney said.

Tierney claims his proposed CAFE is "a low-risk, high-reward proposition to give airlines strong motivation to change practices, rationalise air traffic and embark on a virtuous circle of behaviour." He said there is no good reason not to do it. If, after a given period, it fails in its catalytic purpose (to 'accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative'), the assets get monetised and shareholders/lenders get repaid, quite possibly with profits.

Tierney therefore argues for "...a new disruptive change agent in the supply chain of finance, upstream of the airlines as users. This new change agent will encourage more commercial behaviour amongst the airlines in the sense that they rationalise what they are doing. Such rational behaviour, when set in motion, will give momentum to a

Has the time finally come for Mark Tierney's CAFE?  
IMAGE: MARK TIERNEY

virtuous circle of cause-and-effect: improved operations giving rise to better creditworthiness, giving rise to reduced finance costs, giving rise to greater reinvestment, and so on until African airlines reach the holy grail ... of lowering airfares profitably."

"This would then catalyse what I call SEACAT (safe, efficient, affordable commercial air transport). And it would stymie some of the fragmented airline behaviour which inhibits growth. Such behaviour causes losses to be made by many African airlines," he said.

He adds that the key to CAFE's success will be an ownership/management structure that allows for partial ownership by MDBs/DFIs on the one hand, and partial ownership/management by a blue-chip aircraft lessor team on the other.

Tierney argues that the ability of countries to create gainful employment for the huge population growth that is coming in the next 10 to 20 years will be that much weakened by every cent lost by the airlines.

Tierney claims that there is no shortage of lessors and African airlines who are supportive of the concept. However, progress since he first proposed the concept has been slow. Kenya Airways was the most active promoter until it met with opposition from potential airline partners.

"Safe, efficient and affordable air transport has been shown to add between one and two per cent to GDP growth per annum, and this compounds, over time. And to the extent that you do not have safe, efficient and affordable air transport, it is Africa's loss," Tierney concluded. ▲

# THE LEONE RANGER

Sierra Leone is aiming to become the latest African country with its own airline. **Alan Dron reports.**



Air Sierra Leone's first Embraer 145 regional jet, on lease from XE Jet of Nigeria, has now been painted in the colours of the new airline. IMAGE: AIR SIERRA LEONE.

**I**f all goes according to schedule, Air Sierra Leone will have begun services by the time *African Aerospace* is published; the airline's planned to begin flights on December 2.

Speaking at a press conference in November, Air Sierra Leone CEO Emmanuel Iza said initial plans are to serve regional destinations including Abidjan, Accra, Monrovia, Banjul, Dakar and Conakry, with the ambition of making Freetown International Airport a regional hub.

The second phase of operations will be to feed passengers from those regional destinations into Freetown to connect with a long-haul route to London Gatwick. Flights to London are scheduled to be operated three times a week.

□□□□□

A third phase, according to Iza, will see flights to the US. Iza said that he had initially looked at US services starting within six to 10 months of the airline becoming operational, but "I think we may need to fast-track that process."

To serve the routes, Air Sierra Leone will have an initial fleet of two aircraft; a 50-seat Embraer 145 regional jet, leased from Nigeria's XE Jet, which will service nearby regional capitals; two more Embraer 145s are planned to be provided from the Nigerian carrier's fleet.

The longer-haul, six-hour London route will be undertaken by a 189-seat Boeing 737 MAX 8.

Iza is also CEO of XE Jet, which is supplying technical support for the new airline as well as its Embraer 145s.

Flights from Freetown to the US would require an aircraft with longer range than the 737 MAX 8 and no indication has yet been given as to what type might be used.

At present, the UK and the European Union (EU) ban all Sierra Leonean-registered aircraft from entering their airspace under the EU's Air Safety List, due to previously poor regulatory oversight by Sierra Leone's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

However, this problem is being overcome by Air Sierra Leone operating an aircraft from the UK's Ascend Airways, an ACMI (Aircraft, Crew, Maintenance and Insurance) specialist that provides a turn-key service for other airlines requiring aircraft capacity. Ascend will operate the London flights on a charter basis on behalf of Air Sierra Leone.

Following its 2008 blacklisting, Sierra Leone's CAA has recently opened up its flight registration system and is now offering an airline operating certificate (AOC), the stringent final regulatory hurdle that a prospective airline has to pass before being able to start commercial flights.

Sierra Leone was placed on the blacklist in

2008 for a lack of regulatory oversight of aircraft operating on the Sierra Leone register, namely issuing AOCs without meeting the necessary international safety and oversight requirements.

In April 2024 new Sierra Leone CAA director-general Musayeroh Barrie led a delegation to Brussels to meet the chairman of the European Union's air safety committee, Peter Bombay.

The CAA reported that Bombay had been impressed by the organisation's commitment to build capacity among key technical staff, but said that more work needed to be done in this area, especially in the area of flight safety standards, and encouraged Sierra Leone to prioritise those areas with the assistance of the Italian CAA, ENAC.

□□□□□

After the necessary standards have been reached, Sierra Leone will invite the EU Commission to review the organisation; if the commission is satisfied it will then remove Sierra Leone from the blacklist.

The Brussels visit resulted in the development of a road map with the Commission. A key milestone will be developing the SL CAA's abilities to process AOCs in the internationally-approved manner.

Under this roadmap, Sierra Leone will, in the next few months, strengthen the capacity of its key technical staff. ▲

## SOMMAIRE

### DÉCOLLAGE D'AIR SIERRA LEONE EN AFRIQUE

*La Sierra Leone souhaite entrer dans le cercle des pays africains possédant leur propre compagnie aérienne.*

Si le calendrier est respecté, Air Sierra Leone aura débuté ses opérations aériennes (le 2 décembre 2024) lorsque le magazine sera publié.

Lors de sa conférence de presse en novembre dernier, le CEO d'Air Sierra Leone, Emmanuel Iza, a souligné que la compagnie fera des dessertes régionales dans un premier temps : Abidjan, Accra, Monrovia, Banjul, Dakar and Conakry.

La seconde étape sera de connecter les passagers transitant à Freetown vers des vols long-courriers notamment Londres.

La fréquence vers la capitale anglaise sera de trois vols hebdomadaires. La troisième étape, selon Emmanuel Iza, sera la mise en service de routes vers les États-Unis.

Pour assurer son plan de vol, Air Sierra Leone disposera d'une flotte de deux avions dont un Embraer 145 (50 passagers) loué à XE Jet (Nigéria). Deux Embraer 145 supplémentaires devraient également être livrés via la compagnie nigérienne.

Les vols long-courriers seront assurés avec un Boeing

737 MAX 8. Rappelons qu'Emmanuel Iza est également le directeur général d'XE Jet.

Les vols prévus entre Freetown et les États-Unis nécessiteront un avion avec un plus long rayon d'action que le 737 MAX 8. Air Sierra Leone n'a toutefois pas donné plus d'informations.

Aujourd'hui, le Royaume-Uni et l'Union Européenne ont banni l'ensemble des avions enregistrés en Sierra Leone de leurs espaces aériens respectifs. Cependant, ce problème a été contourné par Air Sierra Leone avec des opérations réalisées en ACMI par l'opérateur Ascend Airways. Il opérera ainsi des vols charter pour Air Sierra Leone.

Le nouveau directeur général de la CAA Musayeroh Barrie a piloté en avril dernier, une délégation à Bruxelles pour rencontrer Peter Bombay, le président du comité de la sécurité aérienne de l'Union Européenne (UE).

Musayeroh Barrie a indiqué que l'UE était impressionnée par les engagements de la CAA mais qu'il restait encore du travail surtout concernant les standards de sécurité aérienne. La compagnie va ainsi consolider les capacités de son équipe technique. ▲

## DANGOTE REFINERY TO REVOLUTIONISE AIR TRANSPORT

*The upcoming ramping-up of production of Jet A1 at the Dangote refinery in Nigeria is a huge step forward for Nigerian civil aviation, particularly for local airlines.*

Despite its large oil reserves, Nigeria, like most oil-producing countries in Africa, does not have adequate refining and storage capacity.

The new infrastructure developed by Nigerian billionaire Aliko Dangote marks a major turning point for the supply of fuel to airlines and for the country's fuel autonomy. Today, the country depends largely on international suppliers (TotalEnergies, Shell, ExxonMobil, etc.) for its Jet A1.

A recent report released by Phillips Consulting underlines that for decades Nigeria has paradoxically struggled with fuel shortages and high prices despite being one of the world's largest crude oil producers.

"The country imports more than 90 per cent of its refined petroleum products due to the inefficiency and under-capacity of its four state-owned refineries, which are often offline due to technical issues," it said.

In 2023, Nigeria spent \$25 billion on petroleum imports, according to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC).

□□□□□

The Dangote refinery will therefore be beneficial to both travellers as air ticket prices in Africa could fall and to the Nigerian economy. In fact, it could help partly solve several challenges. These include aviation fuel supply, whose costs represent between 30 and 40 per cent of operating expenses.

Nigerian minister of aviation, Festus Keyamo, says that due to significant impacts on operating costs there could be a reduction in air ticket prices. According to United Nigeria Airlines, airlines' profit margins, and therefore opportunities for growth (fleet or network expansion), are largely dependent on the cost of fuel, which can account for up to 40 per cent of operating expenses.

At full capacity, the new refinery is expected to produce four million tonnes of aviation fuel per year. According to Dangote Group, this volume will meet the needs of the industry while the surplus will be exported to West Africa and the rest of the continent.

Alongside this potentially game changing project, Nigeria and other African nations must tackle challenges to meet growth forecasts for the civil aviation market in Africa (around 5.5 per cent yearly till 2034), fleet renewal and energy transition to incorporate SAFs. ▲

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The 56th African Airlines Association (AFRAA) Annual General Assembly and Summit, hosted by EgyptAir in mid-November, highlighted both the strong potential of, and serious shortcomings in, the continent's air transport market. **Mark Pilling** reports from Cairo.

# WHEN THE LITTLE GRASSHOPPERS FIGHT

**“W**hen two grasshoppers are fighting, the crow is very happy. The meal is very nice,” said Aaron Munetsi, CEO of the Airlines Association of Southern Africa (AASA), addressing AFRAA delegates.

“Look at how we as African airlines, the little grasshoppers, are busy fighting each other,” he continued.

Munetsi, a respected veteran of the African airline scene and fond of using animal analogies to amplify his points, used his podium time to berate carriers for their lack of collaboration and trust in each other, their lack of scale, and governments for shielding them.

“One of the reasons that I hear why African countries are not signing for

SAATM is because they are busy protecting their national carriers,” observed Munetsi, referring to slow progress towards the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM).

Munetsi is forthright on what the answer is. “I think three things need to happen for us to stop being ineffective grasshoppers. The first one is collaboration and co-operation among African carriers. I don't know how long we've been talking about this, but we need to get to brass tacks and start saying: what does it look like?”

“You're going to die, not necessarily because you are weak but because you are making your neighbour weaker,” said Munetsi.

Secondly, he pointed to the small size of

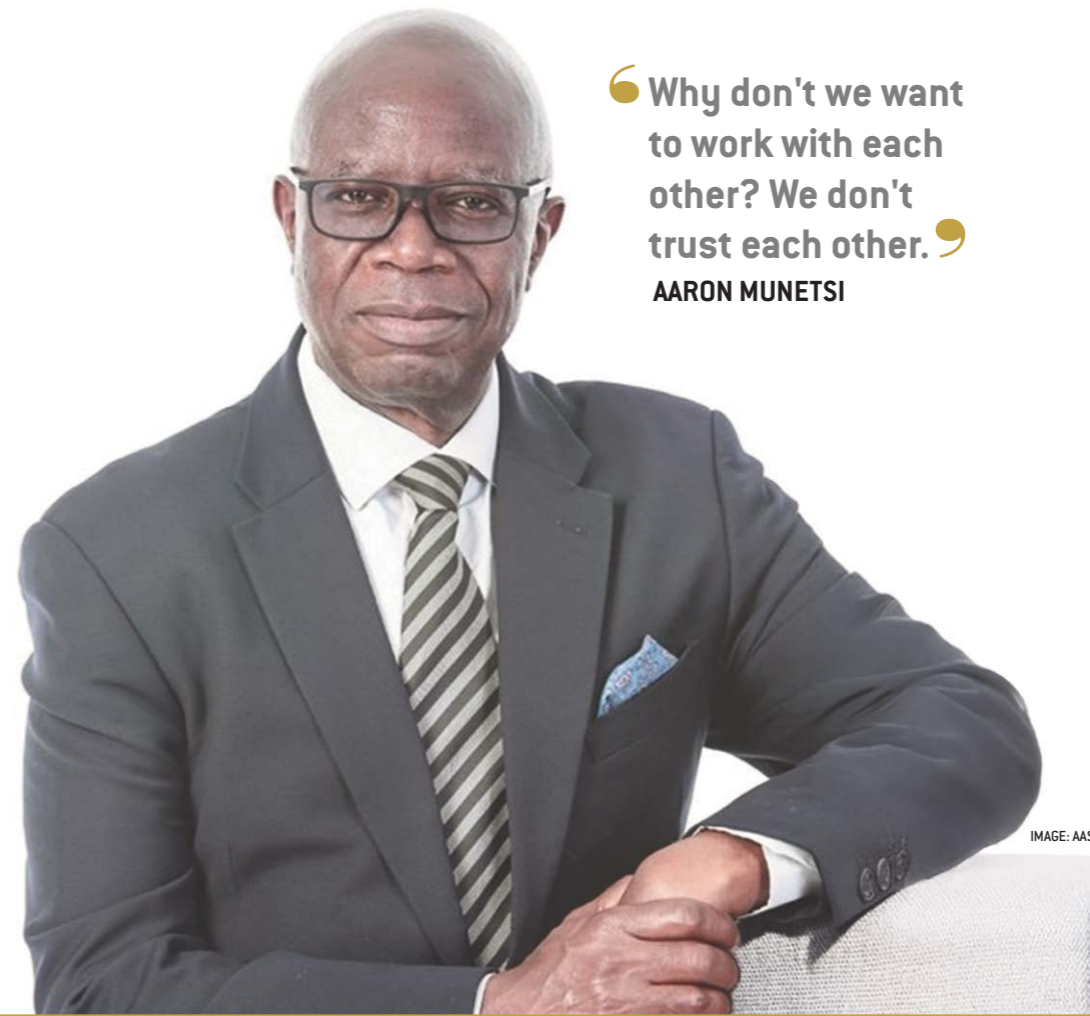


the African commercial aircraft fleet. “Scale is important for us in this business. And now you tell me that you want to go and tell the supply chain to start focusing on giving you spare parts – you don't have scale. You don't have a chance.

“So let us use that opportunity to collaborate and with this we might be able to achieve scale,” he pleaded.

However, thirdly, and most painfully: “Why don't we want to work with each other? We don't trust each other,” said Munetsi.

Munetsi's blunt assessment, and as he offered a recipe to “fix this business”, provided a stark message that for all the talk of Africa's air transport opportunity, there is a long way to go to achieve it.



“Why don't we want to work with each other? We don't trust each other.”

AARON MUNETSI

IMAGE: AASA

## Collaborate, co-operate, and consolidate – African carriers call for change



Willie Walsh: Africa is home to 18 per cent of the world's population, but accounts for just three per cent of global GDP. IMAGE: IATA

As IATA director general Willie Walsh observed in his Cairo speech: “Africa has enormous potential. It is home to 18 per cent of the world's population, but accounts for just three per cent of global GDP. And it accounts for an even smaller share of global air transport – just two per cent.”

The good news is that despite institutionally-high costs and problems with aircraft availability because of the supply chain and OEM delivery delays the industry has shown resilience to recover in traffic volume above pre-pandemic levels, said Abderahmane Berthe, AFRAA secretary general.

Dishearteningly, this recovery has not translated into profits. The collective profitability for African carriers is forecast by IATA to be “razor-thin” in 2024 at a paltry \$100 million.

Speaking on the CEO panel at the AFRAA Summit, EgyptAir Holding

Company chairman engineer Yehia Zakaria, noted with regret that it is carriers from outside the region who are benefiting most from Africa's resurgence.

“Others are getting the rewards of operating in Africa,” he said, referring to the dominant market share carriers such as Emirates, Qatar Airways and Turkish Airlines possess on most of their routes into Africa.



Combatting this advance is far from easy, but at AFRAA there was a crescendo of calls for African carriers to collaborate, co-operate and even consolidate to create airlines with the scale and market power to hold their own and prosper.

However, as Munetsi observed, the truth is that African carriers are too suspicious of each other to forge deeper ties.

Speaking to *African Aerospace* after

the CEO panel, Mesfin Tasew, group CEO of Ethiopian Airlines said: “We are co-operating, but the level of co-operation is very low. It can be enhanced if there is trust. For example, Kenya Airways is at my level. We never co-operate because there is no trust.”

Kenya Airways CEO Alan Kilavuka recognises the inherent weakness of standing alone and is an advocate of collaboration as evidenced by strategic partnership talks with South African Airways (SAA) in 2021, and these may resume. But there seems no potential deal with neighbour Ethiopian on the cards.

“Alan is my best friend,” said Tasew. “We have been talking. We say, let's work together, but in reality there is no trust among African airlines.”

“Maybe I'm not the right person to talk about this. They don't trust us,” acknowledged Tasew, speaking about his fellow African airlines.

This is understandable. His carrier is arguably the only African player with the scale and muscle to take on foreign ones. However, with its strong track-record and string of African airline joint ventures the region's carriers are wary of its intentions and power.

“Up to 80 per cent of traffic is served by non-African airlines. Every airline is happy to have them, flying multiple times with big airplanes into their hubs. That is why I say if we wanted to grow together, let's trust each other,” said Tasew.

Such trust may never transpire, and it may be that the competitive forces unleashed by a regulated air transport market deliver the change. This was the case in the USA and Europe as those markets deregulated.

“SAATM will enable strong airlines to expand their network,” explained Tasew. “Weaker airlines will be

Continued on Page 29

### AFRAA ROUND-UP

■ **Blocked funds:** IATA's Willie Walsh highlighted that globally \$1.662 billion of airline money is blocked from repatriation - \$950 million of which is in African countries. Within Africa, the largest amounts are in the XAF and XOF zones in West and Central Africa where more than \$300 million is being withheld. “Working with your teams, progress has been made. But every success seems to be balanced by an increase somewhere else – the problem is persistent,” said Walsh.

■ **Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS):** Mike Ogbalu III, CEO of PAPSS, updated AFRAA delegates on this initiative from the African Union and the African Continental Free Trade Area secretariat to facilitate instant payments in local currencies using PAPSS. A pilot involving insurance and manufacturing firms and airlines has taken place and it is beginning to be rolled out.

■ **AFRAA chairperson:** Kenya Airways CEO Allan Kilavuka has been appointed as the new AFRAA chairperson. During the AGA Kenya Airways was honoured with The Airline of the Year Award – Best Improved Profitability.

■ **AFRAA 2025:** The 57th AFRAA AGA will take place in Angola from 30 November to 2 December 2025 with TAAG Angola Airlines as the host carrier.

■ **2025 Outlook:** Geopolitical issues and continuing problems in aircraft deliveries and supply chain delays mean the outlook for 2025 is “a little bit tough”, said EgyptAir holding company chairman engineer Yehia Zakaria during AFRAA's closing press conference.

■ **Seen at AFRAA:** An interesting delegate spotted at the AGA was James Hogan, the former head of Etihad and Gulf Air, whose consultancy firm Knighthood Global is working with several African governments, including Zimbabwe, on projects to establish stronger national carriers to help countries develop good connectivity and foster social and economic development.

■ **High costs:** A continual theme during AFRAA was the high cost of doing business in Africa for airlines. In a moment of levity, Kamil Al-Awadhi, regional vice president, Africa and Middle East at IATA observed: “You need to sell a kidney to pay the landing fees in Nigeria.”

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## FOCUS ON AFRAA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

forced either to reinforce, rethink or redevelop their strategy, or they will be out of the market. With SAATM, competition will increase and there will be more consolidation. Instead of having small airlines in large numbers, they will start to consolidate, so that they become strong and competitive.”

Ethiopian is on the consolidation pathway already, but its advances are not always welcome. As Tasew noted: “Every country is protecting their smaller, weaker airlines. There are certain countries, they tell us, no, Ethiopian Airlines, don’t come. They believe that if Ethiopian Airlines goes there, it will be competition, and their national career will be affected.”

While airlines wait for SAATM, events like AFRAA and the annual Aviation Africa Summit hear constant calls for other forms of co-operation.

EgyptAir’s Zakaria told *African Aerospace*: “Everybody talks about SAATM, and everybody is walking alone. We must be united. The competition is not between African airlines, the competition is with others.”



African carriers are talking about the next phase of collaboration, building on traditional co-operation methods such as codeshares, explained Zakaria. However, even codeshare deals take a long time to agree because the “trust between airlines is not as strong as we need it to be,” he added.

Berthe recognises the collaboration difficulties for CEOs and faced them himself. Deals can stall because of basic things like getting the money owed to airlines. This can be problematic as many African carriers are not part of IATA’s clearing house to settle bills, he explained.

However, Zakaria believes the time has come for a change in mindset. “We live in a rich continent, so we have to do it.” He is hopeful the outlook will evolve, pointing to the large number of airline CEOs gathered in Cairo to listen to the collaboration message.

There are other routes to collaboration such as equity partnerships as seen by this year’s 25 per cent stake in South Africa’s Airlink taken by Qatar Airways.

“African airlines are going towards JVs with different partners. This is part of the business, and we have to consider this,” he said. “But finally, we must implement the ways that make the airlines work in free markets under the same regulations. Every country has its own regulations, its



IMAGE: MARK PILLING

“Everybody talks about SAATM, and everybody is walking alone. We must be united. The competition is not between African airlines, the competition is with others.”  
YEHIA ZAKARIA

own rules, which, have hindered the future and the ambitions of airlines.”

The JV pathway to establish network partnerships is not EgyptAir’s strategy today, however it is considering bringing in partners for subsidiary businesses like MRO, ground handling and catering. “We want to engage the private sector in our subsidiaries,” said Zakaria.

The first ever AFRAA annual meeting was hosted in Cairo in 1969 and the 2024 version in the land of the Pharaohs was the third.

AFRAA meetings are a chance to gather at the watering hole, just like the animals do, not to drink water, but because friends and dreams are there, said Munetsi.

After 56 AFRAA AGAs the continent’s leaders are still talking about transformation and development, but is it happening? His dream is that colleagues will question and rethink the current way of doing things.

“You must actually debunk the things that you think you know from all these years, because clearly, they have not been as effective as they should,” said Munetsi.

AFRAA meetings may not force change, but voices like those of Munetsi are getting louder.

Do not expect the grasshoppers to stop fighting overnight, but they are talking. ▲

“I say if we wanted to grow together, let’s trust each other.”  
MESFIN TASEW



IMAGE: MARK PILLING



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## Ethiopia plans mega airport city to deliver global hub

Expanding: Addis Ababa Bole is the major hub for Ethiopian Airlines.  
IMAGE: ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES



**E**thiopian Airlines is growing at a rate of 20 per cent annually. This has required the expansion of the existing hub Addis Ababa Bole International Airport. A new VIP terminal has been built and Terminal I and II have been expanded significantly, growing the annual passenger handling capacity to 25 million.

Considering the fast growth of the national carrier, executives of Ethiopian Airports believe that the passenger traffic will soon exceed the designed capacity of Bole International Airport. This has necessitated the construction of a new mega airport that will transform Ethiopia into a global aviation hub.

The French Consulting firm, ADPI, has been working on the site location near Addis Ababa. After shortlisting seven different locations finally Abusera, a locality found 40 km South East of the capital, was selected for its lower elevation and proximity to Addis Ababa, among other things.

The mega airport city will have four runways and feature a 1.1 million sqm terminal including passenger facilities; 126,190 sqm of airline support facilities; and more than 100,000 sqm of cargo and airport support facilities.

It will also include an associated airfield and other essential airport infrastructure. The airport will have the capacity to handle 110 million passengers a year and provide aprons for 270 aircraft.

The project will be developed in two phases and when the first phase is completed in 2029 the airport will have two runways and a passenger terminal with annual handling capacity of 60 million passengers. The second phase of the project includes the construction of two additional runways, and a second terminal. The mega airport city will also include the development of shopping malls, commercial complex buildings, and hotels. When fully completed the mega airport will be in par with major global aviation hubs like Dubai and Heathrow.

According to Mesfin Tasew, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO, the main objective of the project is making Ethiopia a global aviation hub. "It will play a vital role in enhancing air connectivity between Africa and the rest of the world," Tasew said. The state-of-the-art mega airport city is

believed to revolutionise air travel in the Africa and Middle East region.

Ethiopian Airlines Group has signed a technical advisory and consultancy contract with Dar Al-Handasah Consultants (Shair and Partners), a partner with Zaha Hadid Architects, to embark on the design and supervision of the new international airport. Dar Al-Handasah is a privately-owned international consulting company active in engineering, architecture, planning, environmental consulting, project and construction management, facilities management, and economics, founded in 1956.



"The project will not only enhance connectivity, but also drive economic growth and prioritises environmentally-responsible practices in our country and beyond, reflecting the airline's commitment to innovation and sustainability," Tasew said. "With its exceptional capacity and world-class facilities, this new airport promises to elevate African aviation and strengthen partnerships, marking a significant advancement for the region's air travel infrastructure."

Ethiopian Airlines has rolled out an ambitious growth plan dubbed Vision 2035, which aims at making the aviation group a 25 billion USD company handling 67 million passengers per annum. In the 2023-2024 fiscal year the national airline carried 17 million passengers and generated a seven billion USD revenue. Tasew said the new airport will have a paramount importance in accommodating the airline's fast-growth plan.

Tariq Al-Qanni, director of operations in Ethiopia, Dar Al-Handasah Consultants, said that his company is privileged to be collaborating with Ethiopian Airlines on the mammoth project. "We are happy to work on this visionary project, which will provide vital global air connectivity, accelerate economic growth in Ethiopia, and elevate Ethiopian Airlines into Africa's most strategic and most competitive aviation group," Al-Qanni said.

Sources told *African Aerospace* that Ethiopian Airlines Group has been holding talks with various international financial institutions including the EXIM Bank of China to secure funding for the massive project. ▲



Signed up: Mesfin Tasew Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO, Tariq Al-Qanni, director of operations in Ethiopia, Dar Al-Handasah Consultants.

IMAGE: ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES



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	5. Airport Engineering	17-21 March	Rwanda
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<b>MAY</b>	7. Focus Session online training - <b>CERTIFICATED AND FREE!!</b>	1 May	<b>ONLINE</b>
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<b>JUNE</b>	11. Safety and Route Development at AviaDev 2025	10 June	Zanzibar
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<b>SEPTEMBER</b>	13. Continuous Airworthiness Maintenance Organisations	8-12 September	Rwanda
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	15. International Air Law & Policy	17-19 September	Nigeria
<b>OCTOBER</b>	16. Flight Data Monitoring - <b>NEW!!</b>	6-7 October	Kenya
	17. Human Factors	8-10 October	Kenya
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	19. Aircraft removal	4-7 November	Zambia
	20. Aircraft Marshalling edition 1	10-11 November	Zambia
	21. Aircraft Marshalling edition 2	13-14 November	Zambia
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Benin's new-design AutoGyros (left) and the Tunisian Air Force has received four Cessna 208B Grand Caravan EXs. IMAGES: AUTOGYRO AND TEXTRON.

## EYES IN THE SKY CAN GIVE BORDER CONTROLS AN EDGE

*Benin and Tunisia are the latest African nations to upgrade their border and interior surveillance capabilities with new aircraft. Alan Dron investigates.*

Two African nations plan to upgrade their air surveillance capabilities through very different methods. Benin has accepted two batches of new-design autogyros, while Tunisia is going down the well-established route of using Cessna Caravans in the role. German gyroplane manufacturer AutoGyro has handed over to Benin five Cavalon Sentinels and two Calidus Sentinels. The Cavalon Sentinel is a side-by-side seat model, while the Calidus Sentinel has a tandem-seat arrangement. Both versions are powered by the new Rotax 916 iS engine. This gives the Sentinel an operational range of four hours or approximately 600km/325nm, with a maximum speed of 225 km/h or 120 kts. AutoGyro says that a gyroplane's virtues include the ability to fly very slowly, or even to remain stationary in the air, which makes them an excellent observation platform, notably for border or highway patrols or wildfire spotting.

They can also operate in instrument flight rules (IFR) conditions and have a significantly lower carbon footprint than helicopters. Customer-specified equipment includes a high-resolution day-, night- and infrared-camera system with real-time data downlink to a control centre. AutoGyro is supporting the operation for several months in Benin, assisting with flight crew training and building up the necessary infrastructure for the new fleet.

Meanwhile, the Tunisian Air Force has received four Cessna 208B Grand Caravan EXs, the result of a March 2022 contract placed by US company ATI Engineering Services with Textron Aviation. Textron supplied the aircraft to ATI for the latter company to outfit the airframes with a range of sensors and systems, including an electro-optical/infrared sensor and operator console, plus a video datalink and night-vision compatible lighting. Tunisia's intention is to use the aircraft for a range of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) duties. The deal was part of a larger US government initiative to provide several African countries with a total of 16 Grand Caravan EXs via the US's foreign military sales process. Tunisia joins African nations such as Cameroon, Chad, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, and Uganda in fielding the single turboprop aircraft in the ISR field.

### SOMMAIRE

#### UNE SURVEILLANCE RENFORCÉE DES FRONTIÈRES EN AFRIQUE

Le Bénin et la Tunisie sont les deux pays africains à avoir récemment modernisé la capacité de surveillance de leurs frontières intérieures avec de nouveaux avions.

Le Bénin et la Tunisie modernisent leurs capacités de surveillance aérienne mais avec deux méthodes très différentes.

Le Bénin a opté pour des gyrocoptères (ou autogyres) de nouvelle génération tandis que la Tunisie a choisi des avions éprouvés de Cessna. Le constructeur allemand AutoGyro a en effet livré cinq Cavalon Sentinel et deux Calidus Sentinel au Bénin.

Ces deux gyrocoptères d'AutoGyro sont propulsés par le nouveau moteur Rotax 916 iS. Ils ont une autonomie opérationnelle de quatre heures (soit environ 600 km / 325 miles nautiques) et une vitesse maximale de 225 km/h (soit environ 120 nœuds).

Selon le constructeur AutoGyro, les principaux atouts d'un gyrocoptère incluent une capacité de voler très lentement, voire de rester en vol stationnaire. Cela en fait une excellente plate-forme d'observation en particulier pour les missions de patrouilles frontalières, autoroutières et également de détection des feux de forêt. Les gyrocoptères peuvent également opérer selon les règles de vol à instrument (IFR).

Le client béninois a demandé des équipements spécifiques pour

ces avions et en particulier un système de caméra haute résolution (jour, nuit et avec infrarouge).

AutoGyro soutient ces opérations pendant plusieurs mois au Bénin à travers une formation des équipages de vol et la construction d'une infrastructure adéquate pour la nouvelle flotte du pays.

De son côté, l'armée de l'air tunisienne a pris livraison de quatre Cessna 208B Grand Caravan EX. Un contrat avait été signé en mars 2022 avec Textron Aviation via la société américaine ATI Engineering Services. Textron a fourni les avions à ATI Engineering Services pour équiper les avions d'une gamme de capteurs et de systèmes spécifiques. La Tunisie souhaite les utiliser pour assurer des patrouilles de renseignement, de surveillance et de reconnaissance (ISR).

Cet accord faisait partie d'une initiative plus large du gouvernement américain pour la fourniture un total de 16 Grand Caravan EX à plusieurs pays africains. La Tunisie rejoint ainsi le Cameroun, le Tchad, le Kenya, le Mali, la Mauritanie, le Niger, le Rwanda et l'Ouganda en déployant cet avion dans le domaine des missions ISR.

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## DENEL LAUNCHES NEW MISSILES AND UAS

South African defence conglomerate Denel has announced significant developments in two of its business areas – uncrewed vehicles and air-to-air missiles.

Denel has unveiled a rotary-wing uncrewed air system (RW-UAS) suitable for operating from either land or naval vessels. The helicopter-like craft is designed for the surveillance role, with a variety of sensors.

According to local reports, these include a high-definition colour television camera, together with a thermal imaging camera, plus a laser rangefinder and designator, making it suitable for finding and targeting enemy assets.

Denel failed to respond to *African Aerospace* enquiries about the new system, but according to specialist South African defence website DefenceWeb, the RW-UAS is 5.9m long, with a five-bladed rotor diameter of 6m, a choice of turbocharged petrol or diesel engines giving it a maximum speed of 200km/h and a maximum endurance,

in standard configuration, of up to 10 hours.

For potential buyers seeking a more advanced sensor fit, RW-UAS can carry an optional radar sensor that offers synthetic aperture radar (SAR) and inverse synthetic aperture radar (ISAR) imagery as well as ground moving object indicator imagery. This makes it suitable for aerial mapping of enemy formations. However, Denel seems initially to be aiming the new aircraft at civilian tasks, such as law enforcement, power line inspections and border patrol.

Denel has also begun deliveries to the South African Air Force (SAAF) of its long-delayed A-Darter agile short-range air-to-air missile. Initial training rounds should have been delivered by the time *African Aerospace* appears, with an initial batch of live rounds scheduled for delivery in spring 2025.

The missiles are destined to provide a new capability for the SAAF's Saab Gripen C/D fighter aircraft.

Denel began development of the A-Darter as long ago as 2006, but a long list of problems, notably a chronic lack of funding and the subsequent loss of skilled technical personnel, has repeatedly delayed service entry of the fifth-generation infrared guided missile.

A-Darter has a notably short range – just 7km – but this is partially offset by its large 'off-boreshot' capability; that is, it can be fired at a target anywhere within a 180-degree arc from the launch aircraft's heading. ▲



**A-team:** Denel's A-Darter is destined to become the wingtip-mounted air-to-air missile armament of South Africa's small force of Saab Gripen fighters. IMAGE: SAAF

## MORE NIGERIAN AIR FORCE ACQUISITIONS

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) is continuing to modernise, with its Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal Hasan Abubakar currently studying several options. Because, as he said at the 2024 NAF Training, Operations and Safety Seminar on December 4 in Abuja: "We have to rise to the threats posed by insurgency, terrorism and bandits,"

Under the current government elected in May 2023, the NAF has acquired 12 advanced aircraft, that includes two King Air 360i (in November 2023/May 2024), four Diamond DA-62MPP by December 2023, four T-129 ATAKs (two in October 2024, two in November 2023) and two AW-109 Trekker helicopters (of ten believed to be on order).

Additionally, the CAS announced forthcoming deliveries of various 'high-performance' platforms, including the Leonardo M-346FA light attack jets (24), Airbus C-295 aircraft (two), and Bell AH-1Z attack helicopters (12). He also spoke of 12 second hand Alpha Jets coming from the French Air Force, six to be operationally restored and the other six for spare parts.

The Chief of Training and Operations, Air Vice Marshal FO Edosa, while awarding wings to 28 new NAF pilots and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) operators on December 4, said "14 new platforms



The Leonardo M346FA equipped with a multi-mode Grifo radar, seen here at the Egyptian International Air Show in September, has been purchased by Nigeria, with the first of 24 aircraft on order to be delivered in early 2025. It will be the Nigerian Air Force's most sophisticated aircraft. IMAGE: LEONARDO

had recently been delivered and 50 more are expected soon, raising the need for increased skilled aircrew. The pilots and UAV operators attended training courses, for fighter, helicopter, and UAVs in Nigeria, Egypt, and the United States.

Meanwhile Air Marshal Abubakar, visited Caverton Helicopters MRO facility in Lagos on December 13, to evaluate progress on the ongoing 2,500-hour and 5-year major inspections of two NAF Bell 412 helicopters (NAF 599 and NAF 600).

The visit highlighted the critical role of

indigenous expertise in advancing NAF's operational capabilities and fostering sustainable aviation solutions.

Earlier on November 12, representatives from Czech aerospace company Aero Vodochody visited the NAF HQ, when the CAS spoke of four decades of partnership with the company. He also affirmed his commitment to evaluate their proposals, that including reactivation, upgrades to existing L-39s, and potential acquisition of the L-39 Next Generation (NG). ▲

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Looking ahead: Babcock sees the Aero L-39 Albatross as the starting point as they build their new Defence Academy at Dijon, and try to attract African air forces many of which fly the popular jet trainer.

IMAGE: ALAN WARNES



Babcock is a renowned name in the world of military flying training, with major contracts both in France and the UK. Now the international defence and aerospace company is set to create its own flight training academy at the former French Air Force base at Dijon-Longvic in eastern France. **Alan Warnes** reports.

**Babcock's 39 steps to Africa**

**“W**e are providing a complete system for training the combat crews of tomorrow, and one of our focuses is Africa,” said general (ret) Thierry Caspar-Fille-Lambie, managing director Babcock France.

Babcock France is acquiring 11 L-39s from Apache Aviation, with aspirations to set up several training streams.

“Training young pilots to become fighter pilots; training fighter pilots to become instructor pilots or refresher courses for senior pilots who may have been away from flying for a while,” he said.

“The latter is the course we are focusing on in Africa where some air forces don't currently fly fighters and we can refresh them or maintain their skills.

“We are also offering a tactical training syllabus that will include close air support (CAS) training and intend to update the L-39s with digital technology as well as ROVER-like capability.”

Working with ROVER sees information on targets downloaded from aircraft to the JTAC (Joint Terminal Air Controller) formerly known as a forward air controller.



The latter requirement has been included in the French Air Force Red Air contract tender, which Babcock France is bidding for. This will cover JTAC training, digital CAS and ROVER capabilities to train the JTAC. As a result, Babcock France will be able to offer this service to African or other foreign air forces. “Babcock France will adapt the syllabus to meet the customer's requirements,” Fille-Lambie continued.

Not all the L-39s will be updated, Babcock France is currently designing a prototype upgrade with another company that is being kept confidential. “Implementation of the new systems and certification would take about a year,” he added.

“We could upgrade three or four L-39s initially, but the numbers depend upon us being selected for the FAF Red Air tender, which could be awarded in early 2025. But it is possible to use the L-39 in the old way of doing CAS, without the digital system until we have it, by talking to the JTAC through voice communications.

“We bought the L-39s because we know they are well maintained, and we can fly them until 2030/35 and in our aviation strategy it is a first step in the tactical training of air forces. We want to propose a global training solution for the training of their operational squadrons, which could feature not just the L-39, but also other modern training aircraft. We want to partner with OEMs on a future training aircraft that can work with simulation and emulation etc to ensure it is low-cost.”



Babcock has a lot of experience in educating future pilots, rather than training operational squadrons, which companies like Top Aces, Draken and ATAC does. But Babcock France wants to get a foothold in that business as Thierry is convinced it is no longer the business of air forces to develop a training solution.

“We want to discuss all the options with African countries, initially with air forces that currently fly the L-39, like Uganda, Nigeria and Angola as well as the western African countries in co-operation with the French government like Ivory Coast, Gabon and Senegal.

“Most of the instructors will come from the French Air Force, and we have pilots that we want to work with, but we can't hire them until we get the first contract. Initially we will work with Apache Aviation pilots, who are very experienced.

Fille-Lambie finished: “We hope to have a first contract with an African air force in early 2025. The chief of that air force we won't name, has agreed to send pilots and now he is in discussions with his MOD for the funding.” ▲

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Safran Aircraft Engines will set up a new LEAP engine MRO shop in Casablanca by 2026. This deal is part of an investment plan of more than €1bn (\$1.05bn) to strengthen the engine manufacturer's global MRO network and support the growing fleet of LEAP engines.

Anuradha Deenapanray reports.

## Safran makes a LEAP into the future

**S**afran's strategy is to have repair sources in three regions for each family component: America, Asia-Pacific and Europe, and lastly the Middle East and Africa. The new LEAP MRO shop in Casablanca will further expand Safran's industrial footprint in Morocco while strengthening its partnership which spans more than a quarter of a century.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed during the state visit by French president Emmanuel Macron to Rabat by M. Ryad Mezzour, minister for trade and industry, Karim Zidane, deputy minister for investment, convergence, and assessment of public policies, and Ross McInnes, chairman of Safran's Board. The ceremony was attended by his majesty Mohammed VI.



"We are making unprecedented investments to radically scale up our global MRO network to ensure we keep pace with the expected increase in demand for after sales support. It will be significantly expanded globally, allowing us to provide services where customers need them, while minimising the carbon footprint from our activities" underlines Jean-Paul Alary, Safran Aircraft Engines CEO.

According to Alary, the expansion of Safran's global LEAP MRO network is in response to "the tremendous success of this engine, which has been chosen by some 180 airlines around the world".

To support the expansion of its MRO network, Safran Aircraft Engines plans to hire 4,000 people worldwide and forge local learning and academic partnerships to ensure the upskilling of staff across its MRO structure.

The project will enable the engine manufacturer to handle 1,200 shop visits per year by 2028. This capital outlay will cover the construction of an additional 120,000 sqm of industrial facilities dedicated to LEAP repair and maintenance.

For the Moroccan authorities and the Moroccan Aerospace Industries Association (GIMAS), this project epitomises the trustworthiness and the availability of highly-



▼ Safran plans to hire 4,000 people worldwide and forge local learning and academic partnerships to ensure the upskilling of staff. ▲

skilled labour within the Kingdom's aerospace industry. It is the fruit of constant and large investments over the past decades to transform Morocco into an aerospace hub in the region especially for the supply chain.

The new 25,000 sqm shop to be built in the airport zone of Casablanca will create around 600 direct jobs by 2030. It will benefit from strategic training partnerships to ensure the development of the skills required. Once complete, the new MRO shop will have the capacity to handle 150 engines per year, allowing it to meet fast-growing demand for LEAP shop visits, especially from airlines based in Africa, the Middle East and Europe.



Safran Aircraft Engines has signed several agreements with Moroccan partners during MAS 2024, including one with GIMAS to train engine mechanics and technicians (60 to 100 persons per year as from early 2025) to support Safran's MRO subsidiary SAESM and its future dedicated LEAP MRO shop. Trainees will benefit from existing infrastructure, as well as new, purpose-built facilities belonging to Morocco's foremost training providers.

The investment plan will also encompass a new site in Brussels (Belgium) which came on stream in early 2024 as well as a new facility in Hyderabad (India) which will enter service in 2025. A second MRO shop in Querétaro, Mexico, and a new test platform will begin operations in 2026. Expansion of its Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines facilities, in France, are scheduled for 2025 and 2026, respectively.

The investment plan furthermore includes a new turbine blade repair facility in Rennes (France) and the acquisition of the American company Component Repair Technologies.

Two additional agreements concern the purchase of a six-hectare (approx. 15-acre) plot of land through MedZ, a subsidiary of Morocco's state-owned financial institution Caisse de Dépôt et de Gestion. The second involves a service contract with Midparc for the new MRO shop real estate project. ▲

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Local airlines are increasingly generating concerns in Nigeria as a result of high and increasing foreign exchange rates, compounded by volatility in fuel prices, influenced by recent government policies. **Chukwu Emeke** reports.

## Weakened currency clips Nigerian airlines' wings

The economy acts as the single largest impediment to the aviation industry, creating instability in travel demand, price and cost inflation. **FESTUS KEYAMO**

The exchange rate of Nigeria's Naira currency to one dollar was N450 to US\$1 before June 2023 but has recently jumped to more than N1,900 to US\$1, leaving the struggling Nigerian airline operator with headaches on forex access and other challenges.

Increases in jet fuel prices have also been further empowered by the fuel subsidy removal policy of the current government in Nigeria and the privatisation of the country's oil refining. These have combined to worsen the already overburdening operating costs that airlines in Nigeria have had to contend with.

Many domestic aircraft have been grounded, primarily due to a lack of foreign exchange to keep the airplanes flying, in addition to fuel issues and regulatory verdicts. Between the last quarter of 2022 and November 2024, these factors reduced the number of aircraft operating domestic flights in Nigeria from 107 to about 65.

not retrieve their aircraft that had gone in for checks at different maintenance organisations abroad because of non-availability of forex to pay for services and spare parts, since transactions on aircraft maintenance are done in foreign currencies.

On the fuel challenge, Thomas Ogungbangbe, chief executive officer of CITA aviation fuelling, said: "Aviation fuel is not a local product that the price is determined by the Nigerian government or any government of the world. It is a global product whose prices are announced on a daily basis in the world market. What is wrong with the price is our own exchange rate, which is a bit on the high side."

Alex Nwuba, second vice president, aviation safety round table initiative (ASRTI) said apart from regulatory impediments that are out of control and add to airlines' operational costs, "we are in a state of hyperinflation and significant currency devaluation, in an industry that pays most of its bills in dollars and earns almost all its income in Naira."

"The inputs required for production have been impacted by multi-fold increases, while the marketplace demands a capping of revenues which they call high fares."

Nwuba added: "If we examine aviation fuel, which is probably the largest cost component in the airline business, the prices keep rising. In many climes, hedging provides some breather. Here, the business environment provides no such opportunity. The airlines have proposed importing their fuel, but this like many proposals, represents a poorly thought-through demand that will fail to address the issue."

□□□□□

Although, the minister of aviation and aerospace development, Festus Keyamo has said he has been discussing with the CBN how operators can get forex at a single-digit interest rate of 1.5 to two per cent as requested, Nwuba opined that "unfortunately, it appears that there are limited things the aviation sector can do."

"It neither controls nor appears to have any input into monetary or fiscal policy, apparent from how the issue of payments to foreign airlines was handled without any real word on solutions for domestic airlines."

"The result is that the economy acts as the single largest impediment to the aviation industry, creating instability in travel demand, price and cost inflation, as well as rising operations, high maintenance, and labour costs that erode profit margins and present an existential threat," he said. ▲

IMAGE: ISTOCK / ALLSORTZ





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In partnership with the Flight Safety Foundation (FSF), AFRAA is staging the 2nd edition of the African Aviation Safety & Operations Summit. The event will promote and enhance the safety level in the African region and share operational best practices. Aviation safety and operations events play a crucial role in continuously improving safety and operational processes, as they enable the sharing of relevant information and strengthen safety culture in the civil aviation industry.

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SAFETY ▲

SECURITÉ



On course: Members of the SMS course at ASPC-Rwanda. IMAGE: ASPC

# THE SAFE SPACE...

*A place where people enjoy learning about aviation safety and get equipped to champion it: in Rwanda, the AviAssist Foundation and its partners are creating such a space for Africa's aviation safety community.*

AviAssist, an NGO, is dedicated to promoting and enhancing aviation safety in Africa since 1995. It supports the safety oversight and safety promotion functions from civil aviation authorities, airlines, airports, ground handlers and many other aviation actors. And now, it initiated Africa's first physical safety promotion centre.

The AviAssist Safety Promotion Centre (ASPC)-Rwanda is a hub for learning, researching and experiencing aviation safety. For the current and next generations of Africa's aviation professionals.

"Training, education, and safety communication are important elements of safety promotion", AviAssist board member Harriet Nakazwe explained: "The mission of our first ASPC is to inspire Africa's changing and growing workforce to advance the continent's safety culture."

The ASPC-Rwanda was inspired by examples in Tokyo and Seattle. It combines lessons from significant aviation (near) accidents with the history of aviation safety. The centre works with exhibits that provide background on lessons learned from aviation tragedies in the past.

Tours of ASPC-Rwanda for professionals are available on appointment. Visitors are actively encouraged to share their perspectives on safety on the displays, for further inspiration of other visitors in the future.

The ASPC-Rwanda finds a home at the University of Rwanda. "Rwanda's aviation industry is growing rapidly", Dr Ignace Gatara of the College of Science and Technology of the University of Rwanda explained. "Our university is keen to support that growth with courses such as our envisioned aerospace engineering course."

"The ASPC-Rwanda gives Rwanda, with the ambition to be a knowledge-based economy, the opportunity to play a leading role in pushing the boundaries of aviation safety beyond mere regulatory compliance".

AviAssist director Tom Kok added: "We already are serving seasoned professionals in Africa's aviation industry, but now we are excited to also work with aviation students and youngsters interested in a career in aviation. We are doing that with universities and vocational training

institutes, but also with associations such as the Young Aviators Club of Africa that performs outreach programs to secondary schools".

Next to education, the ASPC-Rwanda will also perform research. At the moment, most data used in the African aviation industry that feed decisions on risk management, come from other continents; North America, Asia and Europe.

Christopher McGregor, chairman of the AviAssist board, said: "Home grown talents can fuel growth in safety data analysis. This can positively influence and develop safety risk management across the continent. Universities will play an important role in building a reliable data ecosystem."



"That's why we are so pleased that our first AviAssist safety promotion centre is housed at the University of Rwanda. Decision makers can increasingly demand relevant information to lay the foundation for changes to procedures, policy making, budgeting and investment decisions."

"The industry has a unique opportunity to help build universities and institutions in Africa that can deliver the next generation of safety researchers", ASPC-Rwanda trainee Alain Dusingize pointed out.

"Institutions like the one I am coordinating here in Rwanda, will support capabilities of African universities to conduct safety research in a very cost-effective way."

AviAssist director Tom Kok said: "African aviation is its own industry, with its own dignity. We must work together as an industry. Our ASPC will help to emphasise the importance of safety, by showing and discussing where we have been, where we are going, and why we must never be complacent in our pursuit of safety."

Africa's aviation industry is excited with the centre's official opening in September 2025. Kok added: "With our first ASPC in Rwanda, we want to strengthen the personal commitment to safety of each African aviation professional. The opening allows the continent a unique opportunity to enhance its safety culture."

Under the theme "Embracing innovation and technology for safe and efficient operations," a key focus at the 2024 IATA World Safety and Operations Conference (WSOC) was the transformative impact of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning and data-driven technologies on aviation safety, efficiency and resilience. **Chloë Greenbank** reports.



# AI is key to safer skies...

**H**eld in Marrakech in October, the three-day event emphasised the importance of prioritising global standards, fostering a strong safety culture and leveraging data effectively, while ensuring human oversight remains at the core of operations.

The event confirmed that, despite an increasingly complex operating environment, more than 4.4 billion passengers flew safely in 2023. Africa accounted for around 161 million of those travellers and while the continent's aviation safety record has historically lagged behind global averages, recent improvements signal progress.

As the host of WSOC 2024, Royal Air Maroc CEO Abdelhamid Addou, highlighted Africa's pivotal role in achieving the industry's safety goals, noting the event's platform to address security and environmental concerns. Addou affirmed Royal Air Maroc's commitment to upholding industry-leading safety practices, emphasising emergency response preparedness, human factors management and accident prevention. The airline's signing of the Safety Leadership Charter Declaration, he said, underscored its support for fostering a positive safety culture at all levels.

Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mesfin Tasew stressed the importance of adopting new technologies to enhance efficiency and reduce costs. AI has become integral to the airline's operations, particularly in "aircraft maintenance, revenue management and customer service", he noted. AI also benefits weather forecasting and training, with Tasew emphasising the need for cost-effective, quality-



**Abdelhamid Addou: Royal Air Maroc improved its fuel efficiency programme, "cutting carbon emissions by 20 per cent, and optimising flight routes using AI for safer and greener operations."** IMAGE: BILLYPIX

assured training to maintain safe operations. Addou echoed this, advocating for the efficient use of AI and e-learning to streamline crew training without compromising quality or safety.

Beyond operational benefits, AI has also bolstered sustainability. Addou shared how Royal Air Maroc improved its fuel efficiency programme, "cutting carbon emissions by 20 per cent, and optimising flight routes using AI for safer and greener operations."

Geopolitical risks were another focal point at the event, with IATA director general Willie

Walsh addressing the impacts of tensions in the Middle East and the Ukraine war. "Airspace closures and GPS jamming as a result of unrest pose operational challenges," he said, underscoring the need for global collaboration to mitigate risks.

A major development during the event was the launch of IATA Connect, a secure platform for aviation safety, security, compliance, and information sharing. It includes tools for accessing the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) registry, facilitating real-time collaboration and streamlined compliance efforts. With the registry acknowledged as a key tool for enhancing safety oversight, it was also noted that IOSA-registered airlines in Africa consistently outperform their non-IOSA counterparts in safety metrics.

The conference also saw the introduction of five principles for managing aircraft operational data (AOD), developed in collaboration with Airbus, Embraer, and Rolls-Royce. These principles aim to optimise the use of AOD for safer and more efficient operations, aligning airlines, manufacturers, and regulators under a shared framework.

Walsh concluded that for IATA, safety is a continuous journey, not a checkbox. By placing safety at the core of global aviation, the organisation aims to ensure passengers travel with confidence while empowering the global aviation sector to thrive as a driver of economic growth.

Jennifer Homendy, chair of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), closed the event reaffirming that safety is fundamentally

about people. "Our greatest asset is our workforce. Technology should supplement safety efforts, not supplant them," she said, praising the industry's dedication to safety. She also highlighted that in 2023 globally there were just 1.87 accidents per million departures.

As Africa and the global aviation industry navigate ongoing challenges, WSOC 2024 concluded that the future of the sector will rely on seamlessly integrating technological advancements with human expertise to uphold and enhance safety. ▲

■ The next WSOC will take place in Xiamen, China, from October 14-16, 2025.

**Jennifer Homendy:**  
"Our greatest asset is our workforce. Technology should supplement safety efforts, not supplant them." IMAGE: BILLYPIX



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# THE MAGNIFICENT SEVENTH

The seventh edition of the Marrakech Air Show, held at Marrakech Royal Moroccan Air Force Base from October 30th to November 2nd, surpassed its promises. The event, which showcased civil, military, defence and space industries, was punctuated by strategic agreements and inspiring conferences.

**Anuradha Deenapanray Chappard** takes a closer look.

MAS 2024 featured a static display of both military and civilian aircraft, along with an indoor showcase of various companies. This setup allowed attendees to explore a wide range of aerospace technologies and innovations, facilitating networking and business opportunities within the industry represented by more than 250 experts.

Many decisive issues were discussed during the conferences. Panelists representing a large and varied spectrum, showed the necessity of sharing, to grow together by tackling problems through bold decisions and cooperation. Participants unanimously recognised the importance of strengthening the industry's integration, upgrading its capacity to keep pace with the accelerating global technological and environmental changes.

Morocco has ambitions to be a reliable partner and a regional aerospace platform. "Our ambition is to double the number of jobs in the aerospace industry by 2030, and we hope to have the first take-off from Morocco of a locally-assembled aircraft", said Ryad Mezzour, minister of industry and trade, during the opening ceremony.

Organised every two years under the aegis of

his excellency King Mohammed VI, each edition of the Marrakech Air Show is attracting more and more industry leaders as Morocco asserts its new role through a well structured aerospace ecosystem, attractive incentives to foreign investors, political stability and the Kingdom's strategic location, modern infrastructure and skilled manpower.



"The Marrakech Air Show has become a distinguished international event and a platform for fruitful exchanges and strategic partnerships between various national and international actors", said Abdellatif Loudiyi, minister delegate to the head of government in charge of the administration of national defence.

He also added: "The Kingdom has reinforced its legal arsenal regarding the defence industry, an essential building block in paving the way for Morocco's entry into the military industry".

Also speaking, the director general of the Caisse de Dépôt et de Gestion (CDG), Khalid Safir, noted "the Kingdom's unwavering support to a strategic sector for industrial emergence and national sovereignty". With more than 20,000

jobs created and a sectoral integration rate exceeding 40 per cent, this sector has become "an essential lever for the development of national economy, positioning Morocco as a competitive best-cost destination for high-tech industries".

In the same vein, the CEO of Royal Air Maroc (RAM), Abdelhamid Addou, emphasised the "influence of the aeronautical industry in Morocco over the last two decades", explaining that, thanks to the strategic vision of HM King Mohammed VI, this sector has experienced a "remarkable growth", which places the Kingdom among the "global players in the aeronautics industry and makes Morocco an attractive destination for international investment".

RAM has entered a new era of expansion with the signing last July of a "programme-contract" that propels the group into a new dynamic of renewed challenges and an ambitious roadmap for the next 14 years.

"It means multiplying our fleet by four, going from 50 to 200 aircraft, multiplying by five the number of our passengers, from seven to 35 million passengers, and going from an annual turnover of nearly two billion dollars to nine billion dollars," Addou said.

Flying start: The Marrakech Airshow wowed visitors with a series of aerial displays. IMAGE: MARRAKECH AIRSHOW



Grand debut: EDGE, one of the world's leading advanced technology and defence groups. IMAGE: EDGE

announced a \$400 million financing facility dedicated to supporting Embraer's E-Jet E2 programme. ABL's investment provides Embraer's airline customers worldwide with enhanced and more affordable financing options for E2 model deliveries, including the E175-E2, E190-E2, and E195-E2.

Secured during the Marrakech Air Show, where Embraer showcased the E195-E2, the ABL-Embraer partnership highlights Morocco's emergence as a key aerospace hub, providing access to Africa's rapidly-growing travel and cargo markets, a strategic air transit point for global trade and shipping, and a talent- and resource-rich environment for maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO).

#### First participations

Drone constructors also showcased their latest innovations, like Baykar, Turkey's first tech company to develop indigenous UAVs. It made its debut at MAS 2024 with an imposing 300-square-metre stand and by presenting its Bayraktar TB3 combat drone on static display at the Marrakech air base. This revolutionary drone made its first flight on October 27, 2023 and stands out for its unique ability to take off and land from short-runway vessels such as the TCG Anadolu aircraft carrier.

EDGE, one of the world's leading advanced technology and defence groups, also made a grand debut. This strategic participation shows EDGE's commitment to the Kingdom of Morocco, to regional growth and consolidating its footprint in North Africa's evolving aerospace and technology ecosystem.

The group showcased an impressive range of cutting-edge technologies, smart weapons, autonomous unmanned aerial systems, non-lethal solutions and various types of ammunition, etc.

Hamad Al Marar, managing director and CEO of EDGE Group, says that the group was present

at MAS 2024 to show how it is best positioned to address the operational challenges faced by its customers in the region.

Among the highlights of the show, the official arrival of the first Apache AH-64E helicopter for Morocco, produced by Boeing, marked a significant milestone. The production of 24 examples for the Royal Air Force has started, confirming Morocco's place as a strategic player in the field of air defense.

The guest of honour of MAS 2024 was the United Arab Emirates. This year's show experienced an unprecedented participation with around 200 exhibitors, more than 75 official delegations, spectacular aerial demonstrations, a dynamic exhibition and a rich programme of high-level conferences dealing with emerging trends and current and future challenges in the sector.



Covering an area of 12,500 sqm, the show hosted industry leaders such as Airbus, CATIC, Embraer, EDCC, Heliconia, Lockheed Martin and Tata Advanced Systems. Their presence testified the growing importance of Morocco in the international aeronautical ecosystem.

The curtain fell on the seventh edition of MAS 2024 with a breathtaking show by the prestigious aerobatic team of the Royal Air Forces "Marche Verte – Green March".

A large audience, of all ages, had the opportunity to admire the various demonstrations and individual figures, in duo or in groups, brilliantly executed by the excellent aerobatics of this famous patrol.

During the demonstration, the pilots delicately drew the number 25 in the Moroccan sky, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the accession of HM King Mohammed VI to the throne of his glorious ancestors. ▲

## ▲ ALL IN A DAY

# Mohamed Hanno

Marcelle Nethersole speaks to the executive chairman and CEO of ASE Group

### Can you tell me about ASE Egypt?

ASE Group was established in 1989 and is one of the leading aviation service providers within the region. Aero Services Egypt was the first company established as part of the group in 1989. ASE Egypt is a designated airline representative and ground service provider based in Cairo. Its establishment is designed to serve existing and future partners of the ASE Group in all Egyptian Airports.

Our customers include leading airlines such as: Aegen Airlines, Lot Polish Airlines, Air Cairo, Emirates Airlines, FlyNas, Condor, Ryanair, Marabu, Sunclass, Universalair and DHL European Air Transport.

### You also have a location in Morocco, as well as the UAE. Can you tell me what you offer there?

Building on the success of ASE Egypt, ASE Group expanded into North Africa in 1998 with the establishment of Airline Supervisor Experts in Morocco. Based in Agadir, ASE Morocco acts as an airline representative, station management provider, and coordinator for ground-handling services at all Moroccan airports.

In 2008, ASE Group expanded to the Middle East with the creation of Associated Services Experts in the UAE. Based in Dubai, ASE UAE offers airline representation, station management, and ground-handling coordination across UAE airports, supporting both current and future partners.

### Are there plans to further expand within Africa?

We do have plans for expansion within Africa. While we may not yet have a physical presence in every location, we can provide comprehensive global flight support across all African airports and the Middle East through our trusted network of partners.

This capability is a result of our strong connections and long-standing presence in the market, enabling us to deliver high-quality services wherever they are needed.

### What challenges do the company face at airports in Africa?

The primary challenges we face in Africa are bureaucracy and certain restrictions. However, thanks to our strong connections and direct approach, we engage with the right sources and key decision-makers.

Additionally, by collaborating with companies that have extensive experience in the region, we are well-equipped to navigate these complexities. ASE Group has the expertise and adaptability to overcome these challenges and quickly respond to any changes that arise.

### What is business aviation like in Egypt?

Business aviation in Egypt is a dynamic and growing sector, driven by the country's strategic geographical location and its role as a gateway between Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. The demand for private and corporate aviation services has been steadily increasing, fuelled by economic development, international business activities, and tourism.

At ASE Group, we have observed a notable rise in requests for executive and VIP services, reflecting a shift toward more personalised and time-efficient travel solutions. We anticipate continued growth in this sector, supported by investments in aviation infrastructure, regulatory improvements, and a growing preference for private travel among high-net-worth individuals and businesses. With our expertise and commitment to excellence, ASE Group is well-positioned to cater to this expanding market, ensuring exceptional service and operational efficiency for our clients.

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

As the CEO of ASE Group, my day is a mixture of strategic decision-making and ensuring the company's vision is brought to life.

I also spend time connecting with stakeholders, including clients and partners, to build strong relationships and explore collaborations that can drive ASE Group forward – my role is about steering the organisation towards sustainable success.

Eventually, my focus is to develop a culture of innovation and excellence, by empowering our team and maintaining our commitment to quality, ensuring ASE Group remains a trusted leader company in the aviation sector.

Each day brings its own unique challenges and opportunities, making the role both dynamic and deeply fulfilling.

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# AVIATION AFRICA

4th – 5th September 2025  
Radisson Blu Hotel & Convention  
Centre, Kigali, Rwanda



IMAGE: ASE GROUP

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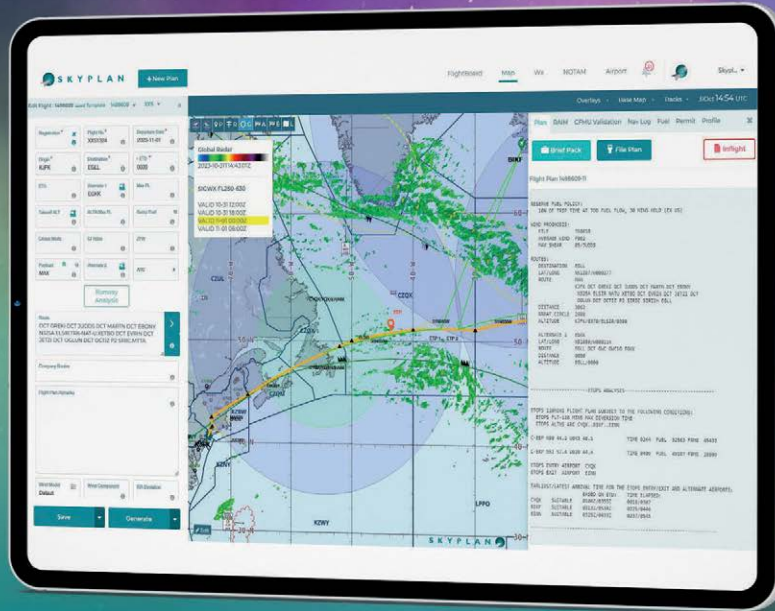
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