



THE AFRICAN
AVIATION SAFETY &
OPERATIONS SUMMIT



African Aviation Closes a Landmark Week in Johannesburg on Resilience, Safety, and the Next Generation

The 14th Aviation Stakeholders Convention and the 3rd African Aviation Safety and Operations Summit conclude with industry-defining outcomes — and over 200 young African youth are inspired at a groundbreaking Youth Outreach event on 21 May.

The African Airlines Association (AFRAA) and South African Airways (SAA) concluded one of the most consequential weeks in African aviation history. Across five days — 17 to 21 May 2026 — Johannesburg hosted the **14th Aviation Stakeholders Convention (ASC)**, the **3rd African Aviation Safety and Operations Summit**, and a landmark **Youth Development in Aviation outreach event**, collectively drawing over 500 registered delegates from nearly 50 countries and inspiring more than 200 high school students to pursue careers in the skies above Africa.

Convened under the theme "**Resilient African Aviation: Partnerships – Empowerment – Profitability**," and held under the high patronage of the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of South Africa, the week's programme united airline CEOs, regulators, financiers, safety experts, air navigation service providers, manufacturers, and civil society in a shared commitment to accelerating the sustainable growth of African aviation.

The 14th Aviation Stakeholders Convention: Charting Africa's Resilient Growth Agenda

The Convention opened on 18 May 2026 with an address by the Guest of Honor, Ms. Barbara Creecy, MP, Minister of Transport of the Republic of South Africa, who reaffirmed the Government's commitment to positioning South Africa and the broader continent as a leading force in global aviation. The opening ceremony brought together over 500 registered delegates from airlines, regulators, airport authorities, financiers, and aviation solution providers spanning nearly 50 countries.

Mr. **Abdérhmane Berthé**, Secretary General of AFRAA, delivered a candid and strategic welcome address, acknowledging the unprecedented complexity facing African carriers — geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, currency pressures, rising operating costs, infrastructure gaps, and aircraft availability constraints. He reminded delegates that the continent's fragmentation across 54 states, multiple regulatory frameworks, and hundreds of restrictive bilateral air services agreements makes collaboration not optional, but existential.

"The question is no longer whether Africa will grow, but whether African aviation will be sufficiently prepared and positioned to capture that growth sustainably and remain competitive. Survival is not the ambition. The ambition is to build an African aviation industry that connects this continent affordably and safely."

— **Mr. Abdérhmane Berthé, Secretary General, AFRAA**

Mr. Matshela Seshibe, Acting CEO of South African Airways, welcomed delegates to Johannesburg — Africa's leading aviation, financial, and industrial hub — stating that "**collaboration is no longer optional for African aviation, it is essential for survival, sustainability and long-term**

competitiveness." Captain **George Kamal**, Acting Group CEO of Kenya Airways and Chairman of the AFRAA Executive Committee, and Mr. **Kamil Al-Awadhi**, Regional Vice President for Africa and Middle East at IATA, also addressed the gathering, each calling for accelerated liberalization, infrastructure investment, and cross-industry cooperation to narrow the gap between Africa's aviation demand and its realized connectivity.

Convention Programme Outcomes

Against a stark backdrop — African carriers are forecast to generate a collective net profit of just **US\$200 million in 2026**, equating to a margin of **US\$1.30 per passenger** compared to a global average of US\$7.90 — the Convention delivered targeted, solution-oriented dialogue across its full three-day programme. Key areas addressed included:

- The opening plenary, "Resilient Growth in a Fragmented Aviation Landscape," set the strategic compass by addressing global uncertainty, geopolitical risks, regulatory divergence and infrastructure constraints, while positioning Africa as the next frontier for aviation growth.
- Fleet selection, acquisition and financing was addressed in a dedicated pre-Convention consultative session facilitated by Mr. Raphael Haddad, President of Jetcraft Commercial, guiding senior airline leaders through network-driven fleet planning, the trade-offs between new and pre-owned aircraft, acquisition processes, and the financing structures available to African carriers including the role of regional development finance institutions.
- Market access and connectivity featured high-level panel discussions on how accelerated liberalization, SAATM implementation, and smarter bilateral arrangements can unlock the 51% increase in intra-African passenger traffic that full market opening promises.
- Air connectivity and aviation hub competitiveness were examined through presentations that benchmarked African hubs against global standards and identified actionable strategies to enhance African airports and airlines as competitive hubs for regional and intercontinental traffic.
- Environmental sustainability and the green transition were explored through dedicated sessions on sustainable aviation fuels (SAF), green financing frameworks, and the regulatory pathways African carriers must navigate to meet global decarbonisation commitments.
- Smart travel technology and digital transformation were addressed through sessions on digital payments, artificial intelligence applications, and the innovation agenda reshaping passenger experience and airline operations across the continent.
- Air cargo as an economic catalyst drew attention to Africa's surging cargo demand — up 16.1% year-on-year in 2024 — with discussions focused on how African carriers can capture a greater share of the continent's growing trade and logistics corridors.
- Space weather risk management was addressed in a technical presentation highlighting operational preparedness for an underappreciated but growing hazard to African aviation routes.
- Airline loyalty strategies and fleet lifecycle management were the subject of masterclasses that provided airline executives with practical frameworks for commercial differentiation and asset optimization.
- Airspace safety and structural profitability concluded the Convention's substantive programme, reinforcing the link between safe, well-managed airspace and the long-term commercial viability of African carriers.

On the eve of the Convention, the AFRAA Distribution Committee, Technical Operations & Training Committee, and Route Network Coordination & Cargo Committee each convened in closed working sessions, reflecting AFRAA's commitment to translating high-level policy dialogue into concrete, actionable collaboration across the aviation value chain.

Masterclasses

The Convention featured three expert-led masterclasses that translated strategic dialogue into practical, actionable knowledge — equipping delegates with frameworks and tools directly applicable to their organizations.

Masterclass 1: Loyalty as a Strategic Growth Lever for African Airlines by Lufthansa Consulting

Delegates explored how loyalty programmes, when designed as profit centres rather than cost centres, can become one of the most powerful tools in an African airline's commercial arsenal. The session covered B2C and B2B loyalty design, data-driven customer lifetime value strategies, and how Loyalty 2.0 innovations and ecosystem partnerships can anchor loyalty at the heart of airline strategy.

Masterclass 2: From Aircraft Selection to Profitable Operations: Prepare, Deliver, Certify, Stabilize, Optimize, Grow by Aviapro & Jetcraft Commercial

This masterclass guided delegates through the full aircraft lifecycle — from network-aligned fleet selection and transaction structuring, through delivery, certification and entry into service, to long-term operational stabilization and performance optimization. Real-world transactions and emerging market case studies illustrated how African airlines can mitigate risk, accelerate revenue, and unlock sustained profitability.

Masterclass 3: Balancing Aircraft Height Keeping Performance and the Risk of Collision in RVSM Airspace by ATNS

This session raised awareness of RVSM compliance obligations and the consequences of non-compliance for airlines and air navigation service providers across AFI States. The session examined how to preserve the capacity and safety benefits of RVSM airspace, avoid FIR suspensions, and prepare for the expansion of RVSM operations as newer, high-altitude aircraft enter African fleets.

The 3rd African Aviation Safety and Operations Summit: Safety as a Continental Shared Responsibility

Organized in partnership with the **Flight Safety Foundation**, the 3rd African Aviation Safety and Operations Summit convened on 19–20 May 2026, bringing together safety professionals, airline operations leaders, regulators, and air navigation service providers in an intensive two-day programme dedicated to operational excellence across the continent.

The Summit delivered practical insights and actionable lessons across four critical dimensions of aviation safety:

- **Human Performance & Fatigue:** Human Performance and Fatigue: Practical interventions that have delivered measurable operational improvements, drawing on case studies from African and global carriers.
- **Procedural Alignment:** Procedural Alignment: Strategies to better align documented procedures with frontline execution, reducing operational drift and the gap between what airlines prescribe and what crews execute.
- **Predictive Safety & Data:** Predictive Safety and Data: How simple, relevant, operationally useful early-warning systems and data analytics support proactive safety decision-making — enabling airlines to move from reactive to predictive safety management.
- **Abuja Safety Targets:** ICAO Global Safety Goals and Abuja Safety Targets: A frank review of progress and gaps in implementation, with a call to action for airlines, airports, ANSPs, and regulators to translate continental targets into everyday operational realities. While significant gains have been made, Africa continues to lag behind global Effective Implementation (EI) scores — reinforcing the urgency of accelerated action.

The Summit concluded with six clear commitments that AFRAA is calling on every stakeholder organization across African aviation to champion:

- Measure what matters — choose a small, stable set of safety indicators and act on them consistently.
- Close the procedure gap — identify where documented procedures and frontline practice have diverged and begin alignment.
- Stay connected — actively participate in the AFRAA Safety Group, share data, and share solutions.
- Use data — harness analytics to detect drift and predict hazards before they manifest into incidents or accidents.
- Small changes, big impact — simplicity beats complexity; consistent small improvements drive culture change over time.
- Collaborate at industry level — deepen cooperation between airlines, regulators, airports, manufacturers, and states for a unified safety programme.

AFRAA and Flight Safety Foundation reaffirmed their commitment to serving as the continent's platform for safety cooperation, technical dialogue, and operational support. The Summit's recommendations will directly guide future initiatives within the AFRAA Safety Group and AFRAA's broader technical and operational programmes.

Youth in Aviation: Igniting Africa's Next Generation — 21 May 2026

In a powerful and forward-looking conclusion to the week's programme, AFRAA — in collaboration with **South African Airways** and with the generous sponsorship of **Air Traffic and Navigation Services (ATNS)** — hosted the 7th edition of the Youth Development in Aviation outreach activity on 21 May 2026 at the iconic **SAA Museum** in Johannesburg.

The event welcomed over **200 high school students from across Johannesburg**, immersing them in the world of aviation careers through presentations, demonstrations, mentorship conversations, and hands-on aircraft visits — many for the very first time. Themed "**African Youth Powering Tomorrow's Aviation**," the event reflected the urgent talent imperative facing the continent: Africa will need over 23,000 new commercial pilots and 24,000 new aircraft maintenance technicians over the next two decades alone.

The morning opened with inspiring remarks from Mr. Abdérahmane Berthé, AFRAA Secretary General; Mr. Moosa Desai, Acting CEO of SAA Technical; and Mr. Peter Boshoff, President of the SAA Museum. Students then engaged in career showcases from SAA Academy, ATNS, ACSA, SACAA, and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), hearing directly from pilots, engineers, air traffic controllers, civil engineers, aviation instructors, and cabin crew leaders about their journeys into the industry.

The centerpiece of the morning was an interactive aircraft visit and one-on-one mentorship session, where students met aviation professionals at dedicated career stands and historic aircraft on display at the Museum — bringing to life the extraordinary breadth and diversity of opportunities within Africa's aviation ecosystem.

The 2026 Youth in Aviation event builds on AFRAA's programme running since 2021, delivered with long-standing partners including Collins Aerospace and member airlines Kenya Airways, EgyptAir,

Ethiopian Airlines, and RwandAir, and implements recommendations from the landmark AFRAA-Collins Aerospace conference of October 2021.

Appreciation to Sponsors

The 14th Aviation Stakeholders Convention and the 3rd African Aviation Safety and Operations Summit were made possible through the generous support of sponsors and partners whose commitment to African aviation development is reflected in their continued investment in this platform. AFRAA and South African Airways extend their profound appreciation to:

- South African Airways — Host airline and Premier Sponsor, whose exceptional hospitality, operational expertise, and commitment to the continent made the entire week possible.
- ASECNA — Agence pour la Sécurité de la Navigation Aérienne en Afrique et à Madagascar, for its unwavering support to African aviation safety and navigation.
- Sandton Convention Bureau — for outstanding venue and destination support in positioning Johannesburg as a world-class convention city.
- Airports Company South Africa (ACSA) — for its leadership in African airport infrastructure and its active participation across the Convention programme.
- PetroSA — for its support to the Convention and its commitment to energy solutions that underpin aviation operations across the continent.
- Airbus — for its continued partnership with African aviation and its contribution to the industry dialogue on fleet, sustainability and the future of flight.
- Boeing — for its long-standing support to African carriers and its engagement on fleet development, training, and the advancement of aviation safety.
- Turkish Airlines — for its partnership and engagement in advancing African connectivity and airline collaboration.
- Kenya Airways — for its dual role as sponsor and as a member airline champion, reinforcing the spirit of pan-African collaboration that defines this Convention.
- ATNS (Air Traffic and Navigation Services) — for its dual sponsorship contribution as a Convention sponsor and as the exclusive sponsor of the Youth Development in Aviation outreach event, directly investing in Africa's next generation of aviation professionals.
- South African Tourism — for its support in showcasing South Africa as a premier destination for international aviation business events and travel.
- Sociedade Gestora de Aeroportos (SGA) — for its engagement as an airport operator committed to advancing African aviation infrastructure.
- SANSA (South African National Space Agency) — for its contribution to the Convention and its engagement on space weather risk management, a critical and emerging operational consideration for African aviation.
- Vivo Energy — for its support to the Convention and its role in ensuring reliable aviation fuel supply across the African continent.

The depth and breadth of this sponsorship community reflects the growing recognition that the Aviation Stakeholders Convention is the essential annual gathering for those shaping the future of African aviation.

Looking Ahead

Together, the 14th Aviation Stakeholders Convention, the 3rd African Aviation Safety and Operations Summit, and the Youth in Aviation outreach event represent a defining week for African aviation — one that moves resolutely beyond aspiration to action. Africa's passenger traffic is projected to more than double to 300 million by 2040, growing at a compound annual rate of approximately 5.8%. The Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), now counting 38 signatory

countries, promises a 51% increase in intra-African passenger traffic and a 26% reduction in airfares upon full implementation.

The week in Johannesburg demonstrated that the continent's airlines, regulators, partners, manufacturers, and future professionals are not only aware of the opportunity — they are ready, willing, and increasingly equipped to seize it together.

AFRAA extends its profound appreciation to the Government of South Africa and the Ministry of Transport; to South African Airways for their exceptional hosting; to all sponsors for their indispensable partnership; to the Flight Safety Foundation for their collaboration on the Safety Summit; to every speaker, panelist, moderator, and delegate who enriched the week's programme; and to the over 200 young Africans who arrived at the SAA Museum on the morning of 21 May with curiosity — and left with possibility.

ABOUT AFRAA

The African Airlines Association (AFRAA) is the leading trade association of African airlines. Founded in Accra, Ghana, in April 1968, and headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, AFRAA's mission is to promote, serve African airlines, and champion Africa's aviation industry. The Association envisions a sustainable, interconnected and affordable Air Transport industry in Africa where African airlines become key players and drivers of African economic development. AFRAA membership cuts across the entire continent and includes all the major intercontinental African operators, representing over 85% of total international traffic carried by African airlines. Follow AFRAA on Facebook, LinkedIn, X, and YouTube.

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