

IATA FOCUS AFRICA CONFERENCE



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
29 – 30 April 2026



Host Airline





Competition Law Guidelines

IATA is publishing these Competition Law Guidelines to ensure that the IATA Aviation Day MENA is conducted in full compliance with all applicable competition laws.

Statement of Policy

IATA Events shall be conducted in full compliance with United States antitrust laws, the competition rules of the European Union, and the competition laws of all other relevant jurisdictions.

Prohibited Agreements and Activities

1. Unless attendees of IATA Events are advised to the contrary by competition counsel, the following types of agreements, whether express or implied, are STRICTLY PROHIBITED:
 - a. Any collective agreement concerning prices or charges for airline services;
 - b. Any collective agreement allocating markets, territories, customers, suppliers or agents;
 - c. Any collective agreement relating to prices or charges to be paid to suppliers, and any other agreement that is intended to, or that in operation is likely to, harm non-participants, including without limitation any agreement that is intended to, or in operation is likely to, exclude a non-participant from any market; and
 - d. Any agreement that is intended to, or in operation is likely to, induce airlines or their suppliers or agents to engage in collective anticompetitive behaviour, or collectively to punish any business enterprise for its exercise of independent business judgment.
2. Recognizing that the existence of an unlawful agreement or concerted practice may be inferred from circumstances, including the exchange of information by competitors, discussions or disclosures of the following types of information, are also PROHIBITED, except when such information has otherwise been made public or IATA competition counsel advises that such discussions are legally permissible:
 - a. Individual airline rates, charges or surcharges;
 - b. Individual airline costs;
 - c. An individual airline's intentions regarding increasing, reducing or reallocating aircraft capacity (including entering or exiting routes);
 - d. An individual airline's intentions regarding charging for certain products or services or changes to the existing charges for such products or services;
 - e. Information on individual airline customers; and
 - f. Any other sensitive commercial or proprietary information that the company would not disclose in the absence of an express or implied agreement to exchange such information for the purpose of reducing or restricting competition in the airline industry.

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 **EMBRAER**



Registration & Welcome Reception - 28 April, 2026

19:00 – 21:00 **Registration & Welcome Cocktail Reception**

Day 1 - 29 April, 2026

08:00 – 09:00 **Registration & Welcome Coffee** 
Sponsored By: Embraer

09:00 – 09:45 **Welcome & Opening Speeches**
Keynote speeches by distinguished industry leaders.

Speakers: [H.E. Alemu Sime](#), Minister of Transport & Logistics, Ethiopia
[H.E. Festus Keyamo](#), Minister of Aviation & Aerospace Development, Nigeria
[Mesfin Tasew](#), Group Chief Executive Officer, Ethiopian Airlines
[Lucy Mbugua](#), Regional Director, ICAO Eastern and Southern African (ESAF) Office
[Adefunke Adeyemi](#), Secretary General, African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC)
[Abderahmane Berthe](#), Secretary General, African Airlines Association (AFRAA)
[Kamil Alawadhi](#), Regional Vice President, Africa & the Middle East, IATA

09:45 – 10:15 **Africa State of the Industry**
This session will set the scene with an overview of the state of Africa's aviation industry, including economic performance and outlook, current challenges, priority areas and unique opportunities for Africa.

Speaker: [Kamil Alawadhi](#), Regional Vice President, Africa & the Middle East, IATA

10:15 – 10:45 **Networking Coffee Break** 
Sponsored By: FIS Global

10:45 – 12:15 **A Collaborative Ecosystem to Unlock Africa's Aviation Potential**
Africa's aviation sector holds vast untapped potential, however realizing it demands a shared vision and aligned strategies across the aviation ecosystem. This panel explores how collaboration between industry leaders, government agencies, and regulatory bodies can overcome fragmentation, unlock investments, and expand connectivity. By fostering strategic partnerships, harmonizing policies, and promoting innovation, stakeholders can build a resilient aviation ecosystem that positions Africa as a dynamic force in the global air transport industry.

Moderator: [Kamil Alawadhi](#)
Regional Vice-President, Africa and Middle East - IATA

Panelists: [H.E. Festus Keyamo](#), Minister of Aviation & Aerospace Development, the Federal Republic of Nigeria
[Mesfin Tassew](#), Group Chief Executive Officer, Ethiopian Airlines
[Abderahmane Berthe](#), Secretary General, AFRAA
[Mpumi Zamazwide Mpofo](#), Chief Executive Officer, Airports Company South Africa
[Aaron Munetsi](#), Chief Executive Officer, AASA
[Obi Ejimofo](#), Head of Commercialization, Pan-African Payment & Settlement System



12:15 – 12:30

Flying Forward in a Changing World

As global trade and geopolitics reshape aviation, emerging markets are moving to the forefront. This keynote explores how Africa's strong demographics, youthful talent, and growing connectivity ambitions can turn global change into opportunity. Drawing parallels with South America, it highlights resilient partnerships, sustainable growth, and aviation's role in enabling economic development, trade, and opportunity across the continent.

Speaker: [Francisco Gomes Neto](#), Group Chief Executive Officer, Embraer

12:30 – 12:45

Sponsor Spotlight: Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS)

Presenter: [Obi Ejimofa](#)
Head of Commercialization, Pan-African Payment & Settlement System

12:45 – 13:45

Networking Lunch Break

Sponsored By: [Network Int.](#)



13:45 – 14:45

Boosting Economic Growth Through Aviation Investment in Africa

Africa's aviation sector plays a pivotal role in fuelling economic development by enhancing trade, boosting tourism, and strengthening regional integration. This panel convenes influential stakeholders to explore how strategic investments in aviation can unlock a transformative growth across the continent. The discussion will focus on the aviation sector's critical development needs, persistent challenges, emerging opportunities, and the actionable roadmap to drive sustainable progress.

Moderator: [Somas Appavou](#)
Regional Director External Affairs Africa, IATA

Panelists: [Dr. Megersa Abate](#), Senior Transport Economist, World Bank
[de Villiers Engelbrecht](#), Chief Executive Officer, Airlink
[Adefunke Adeyemi](#), Secretary General, African Civil Aviation Commission
[Capt. George Kamal](#), Acting Chief Executive Officer, Kenya Airways
[Samson Arega](#), Group Vice President Customer Experience, Ethiopian Airlines

14:45 – 15:45

The Growth Paradox: Navigating the High Cost of Fleet Expansion in Africa

Major aircraft manufacturers expect the global fleet to nearly double by 2044, driven mainly by narrowbody demand. Africa's fleet will also double requiring financing and more professionals in aviation. Yet profitability is constrained by high operating costs, expansion challenged by weak appetite of international financiers, risk premiums from lessors and insurers, and persistent supply chain and maintenance defies.

Moderator: [Romain Ekoto](#)
Regional Director for West & Central Africa, ICAO

Panelists: [Stephan Hannemann](#), Vice-President Sales Africa & Middle East, Embraer
[Federico Bulato](#), Commercial Director Africa, Airbus
[Neil J Coyle](#), Senior Marketing Manager - Middle East and Africa, Boeing
[Prof. Obiora Okonkwo](#), Executive Chairman, United Nigeria Airlines Company
[James Geldenhuys](#), Head of Aircraft Finance, Nedbank

15:45 – 16:00

Sponsor Spotlight: 50 Years Airbus in Africa

Presenter: [Joep Eilers](#)
Airline Marketing Director – Africa, Airbus



16:00 – 16:30 **Networking Coffee Break**

Sponsored By: [Avolon](#)



16:30 – 17:30 **Driving Growth and Air Connectivity Through Tourism**

A presentation followed by a panel discussion exploring the pivotal role of tourism in driving air traffic growth and its contribution to African economies. The session will highlight the unique offerings of major African destinations while benchmarking their attributes and appeal compared to other competing global destinations. It will also examine an Index measuring African destinations attractiveness, and the factors that enable or hinder their success.

Moderators: [Sandile Chipunza](#)
Manager External Affairs, IATA
[Malomane Aaron Phukubye](#)
Assistant Director, Policy Development & Regulation, National Department
of Tourism, South Africa

Panelists: [Donald Emmanuel Payen](#), Director P&S Advisory, ER Aviation
[Manzi Kayihura](#), Executive Chairman, Wilderness Rwanda
[Hellen Mwariri](#), Chief Strategy Officer, Kenya Airways
[Hailemelekot Mamo](#), Vice President Ethiopian Holiday Digital Sales,
Ethiopian Airlines

19:30 – 22:00 **Gala Dinner**

Hosted By: [Ethiopian Airlines](#)





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Day 2 - 30 April, 2026

09:00 – 09:15

Insights of African Airlines' Priorities

African aviation industry has its own unique landscape. Based on the insights obtained from three distinguished African airline CEO's, this presentation session explores African airlines priorities, challenges, and potential opportunities.

Speaker: [Savas Toplama](#)
Senior Manager Consulting Africa & the Middle East, IATA

09:15 – 10:00

Getting Ready for Offers & Orders Across the Value Chain

This panel session brings together airlines, travel sellers, and aggregators to share real-world experiences in modern airline retailing. Speakers will highlight the benefits achieved to date, explore emerging opportunities, and discuss the critical need for supply chain collaboration anchored in a shared commitment to customer-centric innovation.

Moderator: [Diala Halaseh](#)
Regional Head of Distribution & Payment AME, IATA

Panelists: [Julius Thairu](#), Chief Commercial and Customer Officer, Kenya Airways
[Adenike Macaulay](#), Chief Executive Officer, Wakanow
[Alem Bayu](#), Director Distribution and Corporate Sales, Ethiopian Airlines
[Giuseppe Candela](#), VP Global Sales, Airline and Travel Sellers, TPConnects

10:00 – 10:30

Networking Coffee Break

Sponsored By: [ACS](#)



10:30 – 11:15

Integrating Advanced and Efficient Payment Solutions

In a rapidly evolving aviation landscape, delivering seamless and efficient payment experiences is key to boosting customer satisfaction and loyalty. This panel will examine the latest innovations and cost-saving strategies in payment solutions, highlighting their influence on the end-to-end customer journey and the broader travel ecosystem.

Moderator: [Manal Al-Taher](#)
Regional Manager, Transformation & Products, AME, IATA

Panelists: [Paul Mutethia](#), Head of Commercial, Network International
[Christine Kitale](#), Vice Chair, Fintech Association of Kenya (KINTAK)
[Alem Bayu](#), Director Distribution and Corporate Sales, Ethiopian Airlines
[Obi Ejimofe](#), Head of Commercialization, Pan-African Payment & Settlement System (PAPSS)

11:15 – 11:30

**Sponsor Spotlight: Network International
The Role of Network International In The Aviation Industry**

How Network International supports Airlines in Africa: With a case study on an Airline Call Center Set Up.

Presenter: [Paul Mutethia](#)
Head of Commercial, Network International

11:30 – 12:30

Driving Sustainable Aviation in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

This panel will examine practical pathways for African aviation to advance toward global net-zero goals, with a focus on unlocking regional potential for Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) and strengthening the policy and financing conditions necessary for decarbonization. The session will highlight collaborative solutions that can enable sustainable growth for



Africa's air transport ecosystem. It will feature voices from the aviation, energy, regulatory, and climate finance sectors.

Moderator: [Denis Kimani](#), Manager Sustainability Africa, IATA

Panelists: [Maureen Kahonge](#), Director of Commercial and Communications, African Airlines Association (AFRAA)
[Yitatek K. Yitbarek](#), Regional Manager for Africa, Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (RSB)
[Aaron Munetsi](#), Chief Executive Officer, Airlines Association of Southern Africa (AASA)

12:30 – 13:30 **Networking Lunch Break**

Sponsored By: [UBA](#)



13:30 – 13:45 **Sponsor Spotlight: Zemen Bank
Reforms in the Ethiopian Financial Sector**

Presenter: [Michael Tsegaye](#), Chief Officer, Wholesale Banking, Zemen Bank

13:45 – 14:45 **Enhancing Operational Efficiency in African Aviation**

Africa faces some of the highest aviation charges, taxes, and fees in the world, posing a significant barrier to air travel demand and undermining the financial sustainability of industry stakeholders. This panel will explore how governments, airlines, airports, and air navigation service providers can work together to improve operational efficiency and make air travel more affordable across the continent. Through collaborative strategies, the session aims to identify actionable solutions that support growth, accessibility, and long-term viability for African aviation.

Moderator: [Kashif Khalid](#), Director of Operations, Safety & Security, IATA

Panelists: [Sanjeev Gadhia](#), Chief Executive Officer, Astral Aviation
[Lemma Yadecha](#), Chief Commercial Officer, Ethiopian Airlines
[John Nalinya](#), Head of Ground operations, Kenya Airways
[Mohamed Khalid](#), Regional Marketing Director - MEA, Embraer

14:45 – 15:00 **Sponsor Spotlight: Zenith Bank**

Presenter: [Stella Uzoukwu](#)
Group Head, Conglomerate & Aviation, Zenith Bank Plc

15:00 – 15:45 **The Criticality of Collaboration to Deliver Safety Improvements in Africa**

This panel will identify what needs to be done to have faster safety improvement actions in the Region. The session will highlight specific activities in the frame of the IATA's Collaborative Aviation Safety Improvement Program (CASIP) for Africa aiming to create a safe, reliable, and efficient African aviation sector.

Moderator: [Rachael Nyaga](#), Senior Manager Safety, IATA

Panelists: [Capt. Haig Anyonyi](#), Director of Corporate Quality, Safety & Environment, Kenya Airways
[Stuart Fox](#), Director Flight Operations, IATA
[Kayode Aridwodola](#), Director, Global Safety & Regulatory Partnerships, Boeing

15:45 – 16:15 **Networking Coffee Break**

Sponsored By: [Ecobank](#)





16:15 – 17:00

Spotlight on IATAs Airport Ground Operations

African aviation is undergoing rapid growth while still facing significant operational constraints. This panel will examine the key drivers of ground-handling inefficiency, including inadequate and aging infrastructure that limits capacity and slows turnaround performance. It will also explore workforce shortages and skills gaps affecting ramp, baggage, and passenger operations, alongside fragmented digital systems and manual processes that hinder real-time coordination and contribute to preventable delays. Bringing together leaders from across the aviation ecosystem, the session will focus on practical strategies to harmonize standards, strengthen oversight, modernize infrastructure, build talent pipelines, and accelerate digital integration.

Moderator: [Emma Dayo](#)

Senior Manager Ground Operations & Stakeholder Engagement, IATA

Panelists:

[John Nalinya](#), Head of Ground operations, Kenya Airways

[Henok Shegena](#), Manager Group SMS, Industrial safety and ERP, Ethiopian Airlines

[Rachael Ndegwa](#), Chief Executive Officer, Swissport Kenya

[Capt. Gilbert Macharia Kibe](#), Managing Director, Air Transport Consulting

17:00 – 17:15

Recap & Closing Remarks



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Jet fuel is African airlines' single largest operating cost. FIS® Commodity Risk Manager gives fuel buyers, treasurers and risk teams the real-time visibility, hedging tools and valuation accuracy to manage that exposure — and operate more efficiently.

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H.E. Alemu Sime
Minister of Transport & Logistics
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Alemu Sime Feyisa has served as Ethiopia's Minister of Transport and Logistics since 20 January 2023, leading the development, modernization, and regulation of the country's transport and logistics systems.

He holds a bachelor's degree in Management from the Ethiopian Civil Service College and a master's degree in Development Management from Addis Ababa University. Public sources also reference doctoral studies at Chongqing University.

Prior to his ministerial appointment, Alemu was Deputy Director of the Metals and Engineering Corporation (METEC) from 2019 to 2023, contributing to leadership and industrial coordination efforts. His career spans senior political and administrative roles supporting national infrastructure and institutional development.

As minister, he focuses on transport infrastructure modernization, logistics and freight reform, road safety, and regional connectivity. He also represents Ethiopia internationally, including on the United Nations Road Safety Fund board, and supports initiatives in green and integrated transport systems.



H.E. Festus Keyamo
Minister of Aviation & Aerospace Development
The Federal Republic of Nigeria

Festus Egwarewa Adeniyi Keyamo was born on January 21, 1970, in Ughelli, Delta State, Nigeria. He received his early education in Ughelli before earning an LL.B (Second Class Upper) from Bendel State University (now Ambrose Alli University) in 1992. He was called to the Nigerian Bar in 1993 and later became a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (UK).

Keyamo began his legal career at Gani Fawehinmi Chambers during a critical period of pro-democracy activism, earning recognition for his work in landmark cases. In 1995, he established Festus Keyamo Chambers, which has grown into a leading law firm with offices across Nigeria. He also served as private prosecuting counsel to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, handling high-profile and constitutional cases, many on a pro bono basis.

In 2017, he was elevated to Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN). He entered public service in 2019 as Minister of State and currently serves as Nigeria's Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, appointed in August 2023. He was awarded the national honour of Commander of the Order of the Niger (CON).

Outside public service, he is a former newspaper columnist, an Arsenal FC supporter, and enjoys table tennis.



Mesfin Tasew
Group Chief Executive Officer
Ethiopian Airlines

Mr. Mesfin Tasew was appointed as Group Chief Executive Officer of Ethiopian Airlines in March 2022.

He joined Ethiopian in 1984 as Associate Engineer and progressed through the ladder and served in supervisory and managerial positions in the Aircraft Maintenance and Engineering areas. In 1997 and 1999, he was appointed as Director Operations & Technical Systems Support and Chief Information Officer, respectively.

In 2006, he was appointed as Vice President of Maintenance and Engineering. Mr. Mesfin also served as Chief Operating Officer of Ethiopian Airlines from 2010 to 2021, and Chief Executive Officer of ASKY Airlines from April 2021 to March 2022. He also serves as a member of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Board of Governors.

He holds BSC and MSc Degrees in Electrical Engineering from Addis Ababa University. He also holds Master's in Business Administration (MBA) from Open University in the UK.



Lucy Mbugua
Regional Director
ICAO Eastern and Southern African (ESAF) Office

Lucy Mbugua was appointed Regional Director of the ICAO Eastern and Southern African (ESAF) Office effective 19 June 2023. She is a Kenyan national with over 25 years of experience in civil aviation, spanning airport management, airline operations, and international aviation governance.

Ms. Mbugua holds a Master's degree in Aviation Strategy and has held several senior leadership roles in the aviation sector. She served for 11 years at the Kenya Airports Authority, including as Managing Director and General Manager, Marketing and Business Development, where she led major improvements in airport infrastructure, revenue generation, and aviation safety and security standards, contributing significantly to Kenya's air transport development.

Earlier in her career, she was Head of Marketing and Revenue Management at Kenya Airways (1998–2004), where she played a key role in brand development and the introduction of dynamic pricing and capacity management during a period of strong airline performance.

Ms. Mbugua has extensive international aviation experience, having represented Africa on Airports Council International (ACI) World Standing Committees on Environment and Economics. She is well known across the African and Indian Ocean Region and among ICAO partners and stakeholders.



Adefunke Adeyemi
Secretary General
African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC)

Adefunke Adeyemi was elected and appointed Secretary-General of the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) on 1 September 2022. AFCAC is the Specialized Agency of the African Union responsible for civil aviation and the Executing Agency of the Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) and the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM).

In this role, she leads efforts to advance aviation safety, security, market liberalization, environmental protection, and sustainability across Africa's air transport sector.

In November 2024, during AFCAC's 35th Plenary Ordinary Session, she was re-elected for a second three-year term, commencing on 1 September 2025, reflecting strong confidence in her leadership and vision for the sector.

With over 25 years of international experience, Adefunke has been recognized among the 100 Most Inspirational African Women and as one of the 200 Most Influential People of African Descent (MIPAD), and is a recipient of the Ato Girma Wake Lifetime Achievement Award. She holds degrees in Law, an LL.M. from the University of Cambridge, and an MBA from Nanyang Business School.



Abderahmane Berthe
Secretary General
African Airlines Association (AFRAA)

Abd rahmane Berth  took office on 1 January 2018 and brings over 35 years of experience in the airline industry, including 16 years as an airline Chief Executive Officer. He has previously served as CEO of Air Mali and Air Burkina, leading national carriers through complex operational and strategic environments.

Mr. Berth 's career reflects strong adaptability and versatility, shaped by extensive work across Europe and Africa in multicultural settings. His professional experience spans a wide range of aviation functions, including aircraft performance and dispatch engineering, maintenance and operations quality, ground operations, and executive leadership.

This wide exposure has enabled him to develop deep, end-to-end expertise across airline operations and management.

He holds a Master of Engineering from the French Civil Aviation School in Toulouse (1987), a Master of Science from the French Aeronautical and Space School in Toulouse (1988), and a Master of Business Administration from a Business Institute in Toulouse (1989).

In addition, he obtained a Private Pilot License for single-engine aircraft in 1985.



Kamil Alawadhi
Regional Vice President, Africa & the Middle East
IATA

Kamil Al-Awadhi is the Regional Vice-President for Africa and the Middle East (AME), one of the fastest-growing regions in global aviation. In this role, he represents IATA across 68 countries, serving 65 airlines, and leads the execution of IATA's global strategic priorities at the regional level. He advocates on behalf of the industry to uphold global safety standards, enhance connectivity, particularly across Africa, reduce airline costs, and support the long-term sustainability of air transport in the region.

Kamil works closely with regional and international partners, including AFRAA, AACO, AASA, AFCAC, ACAO, and ICAO regional offices, to advance air transport as a key social and economic enabler.

Prior to joining IATA, he served as Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Airways and held senior roles in safety, security, quality management, and enterprise resource planning during a 36-year career in aviation.

A Kuwaiti national, he holds an MBA in Aerospace Management from Toulouse Business School and an Engineering degree in Aircraft Maintenance Management from Air Service Training in the UK.



Mpumi Zamazwide Mpfu
Chief Executive Officer
Airports Company South Africa

Mpumi Zamazwide Mpfu is the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of Airports Company South Africa (ACSA), appointed effective 1 February 2020. She also serves as a member of ACSA's Social and Ethics Committee and Board Investment Committee. At the international level, she is an ACI Africa Board Member, a member of the ACI World Governing Board, and has been nominated as Vice-President.

A qualified Urban, Regional, and Town Planner, Mpumi joined ACSA from the Presidency, where she served as Director-General of the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. Her public service career spans over 25 years, including appointments as Director-General in the Departments of Transport, Defence, and Housing.

While at the Department of Transport, she led the development and oversight of national transport policies across aviation, rail, maritime, and road sectors. She played a key role in landmark projects such as the Gautrain, Bus Rapid Transit systems, King Shaka International Airport, and transport planning for the 2010 FIFA World Cup. She also oversaw the development of South Africa's Airlift Strategy and National Airports Infrastructure Strategic Framework.



Aaron Munetsi
Chief Executive Officer
AASA

Aaron Munetsi currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer at AASA. Prior to joining AASA, he held several commercial management positions at South African Airways, including Regional Manager for Africa and the Middle East and as its Acting Chief Commercial Officer.

For 10 years, he served on the board of Nigeria-South Africa Chamber of Business, and after leaving SAA in 2018 he joined the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) for a stint as its Director: Government, Legal and Industry Affairs. For the past year he has been working as an aero political and business strategy advisor to airlines.

Aaron holds diplomas and certificates in marketing, strategic management and leadership from the University of Zimbabwe, University of Witwatersrand Graduate Business School and the Gordon Institute for Business Studies.



Obi Ejimofe
Head of Commercialization
Pan-African Payment & Settlement System (PAPSS)

Obi has over 12 years of experience in corporate digital transformation, delivering enterprise-wide change for global organizations, alongside more than 15 years of digital entrepreneurship across Africa. He has launched, scaled, and commercialized pan-African digital ventures and has spent the past six years at Afreximbank focused on commercializing its portfolio of digital platforms.

At Afreximbank, Obi led the commercialization and adoption of the Africa Trade Gateway (ATG), a digital trade ecosystem enabling cross-border trade, due diligence, market intelligence, and access to financing for banks and trading companies across the continent.

Previously, he served as Chief Operating Officer and Chief Innovation Officer at Asoko Insight, building a leading pan-African corporate intelligence platform, and as Managing Director at Jumia Home (Lamudi), establishing Nigeria's largest property marketplace prior to its acquisition. Earlier, he led digital transformation initiatives at Thomson Reuters, Philips, BSKyB, and Vodafone.

He holds an Executive MBA from London Business School and a degree in Electronics Engineering from the University of Nigeria.



Francisco Gomes Neto
Group Chief Executive Officer
Embraer

Francisco Gomes Neto has been President and CEO of Embraer since May 2019, leading a global team responsible for the company's recent turnaround and delivering sustainable growth with market value for the business.

He brings 30 years of CEO experience leading companies in the transportation sector in Brazil and overseas. Prior to Embraer, he led the Marcopolo Group, one of the world's leading bus manufacturers.

Gomes Neto was also the CEO Americas of Mann+Hummel and President of Knorr Bremse Brasil, a leading company in rail and commercial vehicles control systems.

In 2024, Gomes Neto was chair of the B20 Trade & Investment task force, focusing on enhancing global trade and investment. This group of global business leaders provided expertise, insights, and recommendations to support G20 countries in negotiations to create more trade and investment opportunities on a global scale.

Gomes Neto holds a degree in Electrical Engineering with a specialization in Business Administration, as well as an MBA in Finance and Control.



Somas Appavou
Regional Director External Affairs & Sustainability, Africa
IATA

Mr. Somas Appavou is currently the Regional Director External Affairs & Sustainability at IATA and based in Nairobi, Kenya. Before joining IATA in 2022, Somas was the Project Leader at Airborne Capital Ltd supporting both the Conversion and Financing of Passenger Aircraft into Freighter (P2F). From 2017 to 2020, Somas was the CEO of Air Mauritius. From 2009 to 2017, he held the position of Senior Sales Director, Middle East and Africa at Airbus.

He has more than 25 years of experience in the aviation industry, having worked in key global markets. He holds a M.Phil.

Degree in Aerospace and Air Transport Economics from l'Ecole Nationale de l'Aviation Civile' and University of Toulouse (France) as well as a Master Degree in Applied Mathematics from the University of Bordeaux (France).

Somas was appointed Member of the Executive Committee of the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) following the election of Air Mauritius to represent the East African region for a period of three years. He has also been elected on the Board of Governors of the International Air Transport Association in 2020 (IATA).



Dr. Megersa Abate
Senior Transport Economist
World Bank

Dr. Megersa Abate is a Senior Transport Economist at the World Bank (Washington, DC), with a strong track record in aviation economics, regulation, and sector reform.

His work focuses on air transport policy and market development, airport and airline economics, and analytics that connect aviation to wider transport and development outcomes—supported by deep experience in transport modelling and sustainable transport. He is engaged in operational lending and analytical work, advising counterparts on sector strategies, institutional strengthening, and investment planning. Megersa holds a Ph.D. in Transport Economics from the Technical University of Denmark, and his research has been published in leading transportation economics journals.

Prior to joining the World Bank, he was a researcher at the Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute (VTI) and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Earlier in his career, he worked at the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority as an air transport expert, grounding his aviation credentials in hands-on regulatory and sector experience.



de Villiers Engelbrecht
Speaker Title
Speaker Organization

de Villiers is the Chief Executive Officer of the privately-owned Airlink group of companies ("Airlink"). de Villiers joined the executive team of Airlink in 2011 and served as the group's Chief Financial Officer from 2013 until his appointment as Chief Executive Officer in April 2025.

Prior to his executive employment at Airlink, de Villiers served as a non-executive director of Airlink between 2007 and 2009 as a shareholder representative of Coronation Capital Limited, a boutique private equity and investment banking house, an institutional shareholder of Airlink, where he was employed since 2000.

He has past experience with Deloitte where he completed his accounting articles and Tiger Brands Limited, a publicly listed FMCG concern.

de Villiers holds a B.Compt degree and a Master of Business Administration (cum laude) degree.

de Villiers is an avid reader of fiction and non-fiction with a specific interest in behavioural economics, and enjoys road running and paragliding in his free time.



Capt. George Kamal
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Kenya Airways

Capt. George Kamal is a distinguished aviation executive with 29 years of leadership experience across the Middle East and Africa. Rising from frontline operations to the C-suite, he has led strategic and operational transformations across multiple airlines, driving sustainable growth, improved performance, and industry recognition.

He currently serves as Acting Group Managing Director and CEO of Kenya Airways PLC, overseeing operational strategy, performance management, and regulatory integration, while advancing safety, efficiency, and service innovation in line with global aviation standards.

Capt. Kamal holds a Doctorate in Business Administration from ESC Clermont School of Business, focused on aviation industry transformation, sustainability, post-pandemic recovery, and the impact of low-cost carriers in Africa, as well as an MSc in Aviation Management from London Metropolitan University.

In 2025, he was named among the Top 10 Transformational Aviation Executives by The Governance & Business Board.



Samson Arega
Group Vice President Customer Experience
Ethiopian Airlines

Mr. Samson Arega has joined Ethiopian as a college trainee in 2014. He has been serving in various positions including Assistant Marketing officer, Jr Sales Representative, Sr Sales Representative, Team leader Sales Support, A/Manager Passenger Sales Addis Ababa, Area Manager Kuwait, Area Manager Canada, and Regional Director Sales & Services United States of America.

He is currently serving Ethiopian as Group Vice President Customer Experience since May 2024.

He holds a BA Degree in International Trade & Investment Management from Adama Science and Technology University, an MSc Degree in Integrated Marketing Management (IMC) from the University of Mississippi, USA.

He also holds a Credential of Readiness Diploma from Harvard Business School for Business Analytics, Economics for Managers, & Financial Accounting and a certificate from London Business School in Leadership Excellence Programme.

Mr. Samson is married and a father of three children.



Romain Ekoto
Regional Director for West & Central Africa
ICAO

Romain Ekoto has held several important positions throughout his career. Prior to his appointment, he was Head of Aviation at the African Development Bank Group (AfDB), where he was responsible for developing and implementing the Bank's strategy to support the aviation sector in Africa.

Previously, he worked at ICAO as a Field Operations Officer, responsible for developing and monitoring assistance to African States, and as a Regional Officer, Technical Assistance and Air Transport, responsible for managing the technical assistance program and promoting air transport policies in the West and Central Africa region.

He also worked for Air France as a Project Manager, where he was responsible for several transformation projects for the digitalization of tools for crew members.

Romain Ekoto is a civil aviation engineer, graduated from the École nationale de l'aviation civile (ENAC) in Toulouse, France. His specialization is air transport, airline and airport management.



Stephan Hannemann
Vice-President Sales Africa & Middle East
Embraer

Stephan Hannemann is the Vice-President Sales Africa & Middle East for Embraer Commercial Aviation. Based in Amsterdam, he oversees and supports all Sales and Marketing activities and customer success in the region, with satellite offices in South Africa and Dubai under his responsibility.

Stephan joined Embraer in 2014, supporting the Sales team with performance and product engineering, business development, market analysis and sales. In 2017, Stephan became Sales Director for Europe until his appointment as Vice President Sales Africa & Middle East in July 2022, supporting airlines in the region to achieve their individual targets with customised fleet solutions.

Raised in Heidelberg/Germany, Stephan holds a banking degree from the Industry and Trade Chamber in Düsseldorf and a bachelor in Aviation Management from the University of Applied Sciences Bad Honnef / Bonn.

As father of two girls, Stephan enjoys spending time with his family, skiing, hiking and travelling the planet.



Federico Bulato
Commercial Director Africa
Airbus

Federico has been part of the Commercial Aircraft Directorate of Airbus, based in the Dubai regional office, since 2018. In his role, he manages Airbus marketing, sales, and support activities for customers across Africa, working closely with airlines to further develop the Airbus Commercial Aircraft business and ecosystem in the region.

Prior to this, Federico served as Customer Support Director at Airbus headquarters in Toulouse, where he led key Entry Into Service projects in Africa, including the A350 induction at Ethiopian Airlines and the A330 induction at RwandAir.

He began his career at Airbus in 2009 as a Fleet Economics analyst, advising airlines worldwide on operational efficiency, dispatch reliability, and cost optimization.

Federico holds a Master of Science in Aerospace Engineering and Management from Delft University of Technology and a Bachelor of Science in Aerospace Systems Engineering from the University of Padova, Italy. He is married with two young boys, with whom he enjoys spending his free time.



Neil J Coyle
Senior Marketing Manager - Middle East and Africa
Boeing

Neil J Coyle have been with Boeing since 2017, and currently the Senior Marketing Manager for the Middle East and Africa region, based in Dubai, UAE.

Neil comes with over 20 years of experience in the aviation industry across a diverse range of roles.

Started his career in Flight Operations and Fleet Strategy at Monarch Airlines in the UK before moving to Bombardier Aerospace in Montreal, Canada where he held various Engineering, Product Development, and Marketing roles across the Commercial and Business Aircraft divisions.

Neil J Coyle holds a Bachelor's degree in Aeronautical Engineering from the University of Glasgow, a Post Grad Diploma in Aircraft Leasing and Finance, and a Commercial Pilot License.



Prof. Obiora Okonkwo
Executive Chairman
United Nigeria Airlines Company

Prof. Obiora Okonkwo is the Executive Chairman of United Nigeria Airlines Company Limited and a respected Nigerian entrepreneur, scholar, and aviation leader. He chairs several businesses across aviation, engineering, security, and hospitality, and is widely recognized for promoting indigenous enterprise and sustainable growth in Nigeria's aviation sector.

Under his leadership, United Nigeria Airlines has emerged as a key domestic carrier, with a strong focus on operational efficiency, safety, and improved air connectivity. His industry perspective is shaped by a rare combination of academic excellence, board-level leadership, and hands-on business experience across multiple sectors.

Prof. Okonkwo holds a PhD in Political Science from the Russian Academy of Sciences, along with degrees in economics and management, all earned with distinction. In recognition of his contributions to national development, he was awarded the Order of the Federal Republic (OFR) by the President of Nigeria.

He is widely regarded as an influential voice on leadership, aviation development, and economic transformation in Africa.



James Geldenhuys
Head of Aircraft Finance
Nedbank

James Geldenhuys, brings over four decades of banking experience and is widely regarded as one of South Africa's most seasoned practitioners in structured and aviation finance. With 33 years in structured finance, he has held senior leadership roles at both ABSA and Nedbank, advising on complex international tax-structured transactions and major oil and energy financings across the African continent.

Since 2001, James has focused on aircraft leasing and airline finance, operating at the intersection of banking, capital markets, and airline operations. In 2008, he founded Nedbank's specialist Aircraft Finance business, establishing a dedicated platform that supports airlines and lessors across market cycles through disciplined structuring, risk management, and deep sector expertise.

His perspective is further shaped by five years as a non-executive director of a regional airline, providing first-hand insight into airline economics, fleet strategy, and operational realities. As a result, James is a credible and authoritative voice on the challenges and strategic direction of the African airline industry.

James holds postgraduate qualifications in investment management, business management, and tax, as well as an executive development qualification from GIBS.



Joep Ellers
Airline Marketing Director – Africa
Airbus

Joep Ellers leads Airbus' Commercial Aircraft marketing efforts across Africa, working closely with airline partners to support the sustainable growth of aviation on the continent.

He joined Airbus in 1994 as an intern in the Future Projects Department, where he contributed to emergency evacuation analysis for the A3XX, later developed into the A380.

After this early involvement, Joep worked within the A330/A340 Product Marketing team before moving into Airline Marketing.

Over more than three decades with Airbus, he has built extensive experience across multiple global markets. In 2008, he was appointed Marketing Director for Sub-Saharan Africa, a role that expanded in 2020 to cover the entire African continent.

Joep holds a degree in Aeronautical Engineering from Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, and a Master's degree in Aerospace Vehicle Design from Cranfield University.



Sandile Chipunza
Manager External Affairs
IATA

Sandile Chipunza is IATA's Manager – External Affairs & Sustainability, Africa, based in Johannesburg, South Africa. In this role, he represents and advances the priorities of IATA's member airlines across the continent, supporting the implementation of IATA's policies, initiatives, and industry solutions in line with the organization's Board and leadership expectations.

Central to his responsibilities is advocacy for the economic and social value of aviation in Africa, including engagement with governments, regulators, and industry stakeholders to promote safe, sustainable, and competitive air transport. He also contributes sector expertise to address industry challenges and support long-term aviation development across the region.

Sandile brings more than 25 years of experience across aviation and travel. Prior to his current role, he held senior positions at IATA in advocacy and industry solutions, and with Airlink and South African Airways in regional and operational roles.

He holds a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of South Africa and professional qualifications from IATA.



Malomane Aaron Phukubye
Assistant Director, Policy Development & Regulation
National Department of Tourism, South Africa

Malomane Aaron Phukubye is an experienced Policy Analyst and Researcher, currently serving as Assistant Director: Policy Development and Regulation at South Africa's National Department of Tourism, and as a Seconded to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) for Africa and the Middle East. He brings strong expertise in policy development and analysis, applied research, strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management, and stakeholder collaboration.

Aaron's work focuses on translating evidence and knowledge into effective policy outcomes, with particular emphasis on aviation and immigration policy as enablers of tourism growth and broader economic development. His experience includes close collaboration with government departments, multidisciplinary research partners, and key stakeholders to design and implement initiatives that promote good governance and sustainable development.

Aaron holds a Master's degree in Public Management and Governance from the University of Johannesburg, with a research focus on evidence-based policymaking in the public sector.



Donald Emmanuel Payen
Director P&S Advisory
ER Aviation

Donald Emmanuel Payen is a seasoned airline professional. He spent 41 years at Air Mauritius including over 25 years at leadership level covering several areas.

Upon his retirement in 2020, he joined the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism of Mauritius as his Senior Adviser for management of the pandemic, preparing the reopening of borders and relaunching tourism.

Donald served several boards including the airport, the airport duty free. He also chaired the tourism board during the pandemic.

Donald now operates in a non-executive capacity on several boards in Aviation and tourism. And advises a few CEO's in areas ranging aviation, hospitality and ... ocean protection!



Manzi Kayihura
Executive Chairman
Wilderness Rwanda

Manzi is the Executive Chairman of Wilderness Rwanda and co-founder of Thousand Hills Africa, a leading destination management company in the region. After spending more than a decade in Germany, he returned to Rwanda and brings over 30 years of experience in the airline and travel industry, including more than 20 years in senior management and ownership roles. He previously served as CEO of Rwanda's national airline, building deep international expertise across aviation and travel management.

Manzi has played a significant role in the development of Rwanda's travel and tourism sector, applying strong capabilities in market insight, marketing, planning, analysis, and negotiation. He is widely regarded as a pioneer of ultra-high-end tourism in Rwanda, and through his partnership with Wilderness Rwanda, is involved in iconic properties including Bisate Reserve, Bisate Lodge, Magashi Camp, and Magashi Peninsula.

He has been instrumental in shaping national tourism policy, serving on Rwanda's Tourism Working Group, and is a founding member and former Chairman of the Rwanda Tours and Travel Association. He also serves on the boards of Akagera Aviation and the Aegis Trust.



Hellen Mwariri
Chief Strategy Officer
Kenya Airways

Hellen is the Chief Strategy and Innovations Officer at Kenya Airways Plc, with extensive experience across strategy, finance, and audit. During her career at Kenya Airways, she has held several senior leadership roles, including Chief Financial Officer, Head of Treasury & Corporate Finance, Head of Pricing & Revenue Management, and Head of Internal Audit.

Prior to joining the airline, she gained valuable experience at East African Breweries Ltd (Diageo), Ernst & Young, and Family Bank.

Beyond her executive responsibilities, Hellen is deeply committed to leadership development. She actively mentors young women and serves as Patron of the EmpowHer Program at Kenya Airways, leading initiatives that support women's progression into leadership roles.

Hellen holds a Bachelor of Commerce from Kenyatta University and an MBA in Strategic Management from United States International University. She has completed a Global CEO Programme delivered jointly by Strathmore Business School, Lagos Business School, and Yale School of Management, and is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Business Administration at Clermont School of Business.



Hailemeleket Mamo
Vice President Ethiopian Holiday Digital Sales
Ethiopian Airlines

Hailemeleket Mamo is a senior aviation executive with more than three decades of experience at Ethiopian Airlines, spanning commercial, customer experience, marketing, and executive leadership roles. He joined the airline in October 1992 as a Junior Marketing Agent and has since built a distinguished career across diverse functions and international markets.

He has held senior leadership positions including Managing Director of Ethiopian Regional Services, CEO of Malawian Airlines, Director for International Airport Services, and Director for Ground Handling & Customer Experience, contributing significantly to service excellence and operational performance.

Since April 2022, Mr. Hailemeleket has served as Vice President – Ethiopian Holidays, Digital Sales, and Global Customer Interaction Center (GCIC), overseeing customer-facing commercial platforms, travel products, and global customer engagement.

He holds a BA in Management and a Master of Business Administration from Addis Ababa University.



Savas Toplama
Senior Manager Consulting Africa & the Middle East
IATA

Savas is a seasoned Senior Manager responsible for IATA Consulting across KSA and Africa. His expertise spans program and project management, aviation and commercial strategy, technical operations, and digital transformation.

He brings extensive international experience, having delivered more than 25 projects in 20 countries across four continents.

Before joining IATA, Savas served as Chief Commercial Officer (CCO) at flydocs, a provider of SaaS solutions for the aviation sector. He also worked with Deloitte Consulting and held several key leadership roles within the Lufthansa Group, accumulating over 20 years of experience in the aviation industry.

A German national, Savas holds an MBA from the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management and a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering from Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg.

His background combines strategic insight, technical expertise, and global industry exposure.



Diala Halaseh
Regional Head of Distribution & Payment AME
IATA

Diala is entrusted with ensuring AME airlines maintain control over their products, finances, and data through the adoption of modern standards, enabling them to thrive in an evolving industry landscape and consistently surpass customer expectations.

In this pivotal role, she leads the strategic direction and development of financial distribution and payment activities across the AME region.

Her responsibilities extend to the regional management of IATA Agency Programmes, including IATA Settlement Systems (ISS) for both Passenger and Cargo operations.

Diala has over 18 years of experience in aviation industry, started her career with Royal Jordanian Airlines in Cargo department then joined IATA in 2008, since then Diala took various key positions within the regional office in Amman.

Diala speaks Arabic and English Languages and she holds a BS Degree in Computer Information Systems (CIS) from the University of Jordan.



Julius Thairu
Chief Commercial and Customer Officer
Kenya Airways

Julius joined Kenya Airways in 2001 and is currently Chief Commercial & Customer Officer responsible for strategy development and execution of revenue and customer initiatives.

He has extensive international commercial experience in delivering growth and improving performance in the aviation industry having worked in various roles across three continents.

Prior to his current role, he was Director for Sales responsible for development and implementation of the global Commercial sales strategy. He was also Head of Pricing, Revenue Management and Distribution June 2009 to May 2014.

Julius also holds the role of non-executive Director of one of the leading low cost carriers in Africa Jambo Jet Airline.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Building Economics from the University of Nairobi and has attended various management and leadership courses, including the Executive Development Programme with Gordon Business School, South Africa.



Adenike Macaulay
Chief Executive Officer
Wakanow

Mrs. Adenike Macaulay is a transformational leader with over 17 years' experience in the Travel Industry and a unique expertise in leading multinational organizations through accelerated growth and profitability.

A thought leader with a deep understanding of the Sub-Saharan Africa market environment as well as European and Middle Eastern business cultures.

She is currently the Chief Executive Officer of Wakanow.com Nigeria Group, Africa's leading travel agency and travel technology firm. Prior to joining Wakanow, she was the first female and first African General Manager sales for Lufthansa Group in Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea.

Recognized worldwide as a prominent voice of African travel and tourism as one of the Top 30 Tourism & Hospitality influencers in Africa by the PYNE awards, and as one of the 100 most powerful persons in Africa Hospitality by the International Hospitality Institute in 2022 and one of the 50 Most Influential Women in Global Hospitality and Travel in 2025 amongst other awards.



Alem Bayu
Director Distribution and Corporate Sales
Ethiopian Airlines

Alem Bayu is the Director of Distribution and Global Corporate Sales at Ethiopian Airlines, overseeing overall distribution including e-commerce, payments and GDS, NDC, B2B platforms, GSA and all agency management, and corporate accounts relationships.

Previously, he led ShebaMiles, the airline's loyalty program, where he spearheaded program development, system upgrades, member engagement, and strategic partnerships—including collaborations with Star Alliance partners and co-branded card initiatives.

With expertise in airline marketing, loyalty, sales, and operations, Alem has been instrumental in shaping Ethiopian commercial strategy. Experienced leader and former regional manager based in Southeast Asia he is recognized for driving revenue growth, building strong partnerships, and navigating complex regulatory environments with operational agility.

Alem has a background in Economics and holds a Master's degree in Marketing Management from Addis Ababa University.



Giuseppe Candela
VP Global Sales, Airline and Travel Sellers
TPConnects

Giuseppe Candela is a senior airline distribution and retailing executive with over 15 years of experience in transforming airline commercial and technology strategies.

He currently serves as VP Global Sales at TPConnects Technologies, where he leads global growth initiatives for the company's airline retailing and aggregation platforms.

Giuseppe has extensive expertise in IATA NDC, Offer & Order management, and modern airline retailing architectures.

Throughout his past career, including Amadeus he has played a key role in designing and delivering next-generation distribution solutions, working closely with airlines across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia-Pacific to accelerate their transition from legacy GDS models to dynamic, customer-centric retailing environments.



Manal Al-Taher
Regional Manager, Transformation & Products, AME
IATA

Manal El-Taher joined IATA in 2011 and is currently the Regional Manager, Transformation & Products, Financial Settlement & Distribution Services covering 67 countries across Africa and Middle East.

In her current role, she is responsible for advocating and raising awareness around IATA Industry Distribution and Payment Programs across Airlines and industry key partners such as Travel agents, Freight Forwarders, Technology providers and along with different products that provide the aviation industry with the means to save, improve, innovate, and sustain its businesses and financial health such as Modern Airline Retailing, IATA Payment Programs.

Manal has 15 years of extensive experience in the aviation industry and is recognized as a subject matter expert in retailing, payment, digital transformation, and Agency Management Program.

Manal is fluent in Arabic and English and holds a Bachelor of Money, Banking and Customs.



Paul Mutethia
Head of Commercial
Network International

Paul Mutethia is the Head of Commercial at Network International, leading the acquiring business and overseeing sales operations, partnerships, and commercial functions across East and Southern Africa, with a focus on expanding payment acceptance and merchant solutions in the region.

He has 20 years of experience in banking and fintech, including 12 years at KCB Bank Card Centre and six years at Visa International as Lead for Merchant Acceptance, contributing to payment expansion in several East African and Indian Ocean countries.

Paul has played a key role in Kenya's payments industry by leading merchant training in the Kenya Payments Forum, a collaborative platform advancing the payments ecosystem.

He holds advanced degrees in strategic management and marketing, along with specialized professional courses from major card schemes, and continues to impact the payments landscape through leadership and innovation.



Christine Kitale
Vice Chair
Fintech Association of Kenya (KINTAK)

Christine is a Certified Fintech Practitioner leading operations at Pegasus East Africa, a payment gateway company registered across Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda.

With an MBA from Lancaster University, a BBIT from Strathmore University, and PMP certification, she combines technical expertise with strategic business acumen. She is also a Certified Fintech Practitioner.

As Vice Chair of AFIK and part of the Africa Fintech Network, Christine is passionate about driving positive change across the continent.

Her primary goal is to attain competitive positioning for African merchants by encouraging inclusivity in the financial innovation space and continuously seeking solutions that enable digital commerce, digital literacy, and innovation.

Christine's leadership extends beyond corporate success - she's building ecosystems that empower merchants and communities through accessible financial technology.



Denis Kimani
Manager Sustainability Africa
IATA

Mr. Kimani holds a Bachelor of Laws, with a focus on Air and Space Law, from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Law from the Kenya School of Law. He has undertaken specialized aviation training with ICAO and IATA, and holds qualifications in international air law, airline contract law, safety oversight, and regulatory monitoring, reflecting a strong grounding in aviation regulation and sustainability policy.

He currently serves as Manager, Sustainability (Africa) at the International Air Transport Association (IATA), where he leads regional policy analysis and advocacy on aviation climate matters. His work focuses on supporting states in developing frameworks for Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) and Low Carbon Aviation Fuels (LCAF), advancing alignment with ICAO CORSIA, and promoting cost-effective, harmonized climate measures. He works closely with governments, regional bodies, and industry stakeholders, and contributes to discussions on carbon markets, emissions accounting, and sustainability implementation mechanisms.

Prior to joining IATA, he served at the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority, contributing to aviation legislation and regulatory oversight.



Maureen Kahonge
Director of Commercial and Communications
AFRAA

Maureen Kahonge is a seasoned business development and communications strategist with over 15 years of experience at the African Airlines Association (AFRAA), Africa's leading airline trade body. She plays a pivotal role in shaping and delivering high-impact initiatives that strengthen collaboration between African airlines, global partners, and key industry stakeholders. Through her work, Maureen has consistently contributed to advancing sustainable growth, operational excellence, and competitiveness across the continent's air transport ecosystem.

Maureen brings deep industry insight and a strategic lens to her role, enabling her to effectively support policy dialogue, stakeholder engagement, and the development of platforms that foster innovation and long-term value creation for African aviation.

She holds an MBA in Strategic Management and Finance from United States International University-Africa and an IATA Diploma in Airline Management. She is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Sustainable Air Transport Management at ITAérea Aeronautical Business School. Maureen also earned a Bachelor of Education in Business Administration and French from Kenyatta University.



Yitatek K. Yitbarek
Regional Manager for Africa
Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (RSB)

Yitatek has over 10 years of experience in environmental and climate research and applications. For the past 6+ years, he has been actively involved in environmental sustainability fields, particularly in Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).

His work has concentrated on feedstock assessment, sustainability certification, and the development and deployment of SAF in Africa. He is the Regional Manager for Africa at the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (RSB), an international NGO working in sustainability fields.

His significant contributions include creating the SAF roadmap for Ethiopia, conducting a feasibility study for SAF development under ICAO, and providing training on SAF sustainability in Africa.

He is a member of the expert group developing policy guidelines for Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), which is being created under the auspices of the African Union(AU) and the African Civil Aviation Commission (AfCAC).

He is also currently involved in the development of the SAF roadmap for Togo and Angola.



Michael Tsegaye
Chief Officer, Wholesale Banking
Zemen Bank

Ato Michael has been with Zemen Bank since 2012, bringing over a decade of experience in banking and corporate leadership. He began his career as a sales associate at a private website development company and later gained exposure to the aviation sector through a brief tenure at Ethiopian Airlines.

Since joining Zemen Bank, Michael has held several progressively senior roles, including Senior Officer, Division Manager for Promotion and Public Relations, and Fund Manager, where he contributed to strengthening the Bank's brand presence, customer engagement, and portfolio performance.

He has also served as Director for Corporate and Institutional Banking, overseeing key client relationships and supporting the Bank's strategic growth in the corporate and institutional segments.

Throughout his career, Michael has demonstrated strong capabilities in relationship management, business development, and cross-functional leadership.

He is known for his results-driven approach and commitment to service excellence. Michael holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Management from Mekelle University.



Kashif Khalid
Director of Operations, Safety & Security
IATA

Kashif provides leadership and supports IATA's regional agenda, advocating with stakeholders to further IATA's mission, projects, strategic partnerships, and industry standards. He focuses on Airports, Infrastructure, Customer Experience, Safety, Flight Operations, Cargo, Ground Operations, Security, and Facilitation.

Previously, he was Head of Assets & Acquisitions at Abu Dhabi Airports, leading global airport development and M&A for the UAE Government and its Sovereign Wealth Fund. He developed strategies for innovation, sustainability, and operations for UAE Airports. Kashif has advised global airports, governments, and investors on development projects, operations strategy, revenue development, privatizations, and public-private partnerships.

Earlier, he held senior executive positions in aviation with the Dubai Government, Abu Dhabi Government, Citi, and British Airways. Kashif graduated Magna Cum Laude from New York Tech in International Business & Economics and holds an MS-IB. His credentials include an advanced degree in Airport Planning and Finance, IAP, and the ACI Airport Executive Leadership program. He is also a Member of the Royal Aeronautical Society (MRAeS).



Sanjeev Gadhia
Chief Executive Officer
Astral Aviation

Sanjeev Gadhia is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Astral Aviation, one of Africa's leading all-cargo airlines, headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. He founded Astral Aviation in 2000 and has since grown the company into a pan-African cargo operator serving key markets across Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia.

With over 25 years of experience in air cargo and logistics, Sanjeev has played a pivotal role in improving intra-African connectivity and supporting trade, humanitarian relief, and time-critical supply chains.

A banker by training, Sanjeev began his career in finance before transitioning into entrepreneurship and aviation. Under his leadership, Astral Aviation has built a strong reputation for operational reliability and serving underserved markets across the continent. He is an active industry leader, serving in senior advisory and governance roles within global aviation and cargo associations, where he advocates for sustainable growth of air cargo in Africa.

Sanjeev holds an MBA from Schiller International University, London, and is widely recognized for his visionary leadership in African aviation.



Lemma Yadecha
Chief Commercial Officer
Ethiopian Airlines

Mr. Lemma joined Ethiopian on September 06, 1999 as Marketing Agent. He has been serving in various managerial positions including Lead Central Reservation Control Agent, Supervisor Central Reservation Control and Revenue Management, Area Manager Burkina Faso, Malaysia and France.

In December 2017, Mr. Lemma was appointed as Director Global Call Center, and A/Managing Director Ethiopian International Services since September 01, 2019.

Currently, he is serving Ethiopian as Chief Commercial Officer as of April 2022.

He holds BSC Degree in Civil Engineering from Addis Ababa University, Faculty of Technology.

He also holds MSC in Geotechnical Engineering from Addis Ababa University, Faculty of Technology and MSC Degree in Integrated Marketing Communication from University of Mississippi.



John Nalianya
Head of Ground operations
Kenya Airways

John currently serves as the Head of Ground Operations at Kenya Airways, where he is responsible for delivering seamless, end to end guest ground services at East Africa's leading hub, Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA). He leads the Ground Operations department in providing high quality service to Kenya Airways and 15 other partner airlines for which the airline serves as the ground handler.

With a distinguished aviation career spanning multiple critical operational domains, John brings deep expertise across Air Traffic Control Services, Flight Dispatch, Integrated Operations Control, Hub Operations, Station Management, Crew Planning and Scheduling, Airline Operations Audits, and training. His extensive operational knowledge and leadership experience have positioned him as a trusted figure in managing complex, high stake airline environments.

Previous leadership roles include Head of Passenger Services, Head of Operations Control Centre, Manager Crew Scheduling, Manager Flight Operations Control and Air Traffic Control Officer.

John is recognized for his strong operational leadership, collaborative approach, and commitment to delivering safe, efficient, and customer centric ground operations that support Kenya Airways' mission and the wider aviation ecosystem.



Mohamed Khalid
Regional Marketing Director - MEA
Embraer

Mohamed Khalid is a Regional Director for Airline Marketing at Embraer, covering the Middle East and Africa.

He works closely with airlines, lessors, and industry stakeholders on fleet strategy, aircraft economics, and market development across emerging and mature aviation markets.

With a strong background in airline economics and network analysis, Mohamed supports operators in aligning aircraft performance with real world operational and commercial needs, focusing on efficiency, utilization, and sustainable growth.

He holds a Master's degree in Air Transport Management from Cranfield University and brings an OEM perspective grounded in practical airline decision making across the region.



Capt. Haig Anyonyi
Director of Corporate Quality, Safety & Environment
Kenya Airways

Capt. Haig Anyonyi is the Director of Corporate Quality, Safety & Environment at Kenya Airways and a highly respected aviation leader with more than 20 years of operational experience.

An Airline Captain with over 10,000 flight hours, he brings deep practical knowledge and strategic leadership to the management of safety, quality, and environmental performance across the airline's global operations. In his current role, Capt. Anyonyi provides enterprise-wide oversight of regulatory compliance, safety management systems, and operational risk, ensuring alignment with international standards and best practices.

Beyond Kenya Airways, he plays a prominent role in shaping aviation safety across the continent and globally. He serves as the Safety Group Chairman for the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) and is a member of the IATA Safety Group, contributing to industry-wide safety initiatives and policy development.

Capt. Anyonyi is deeply committed to fostering a proactive safety culture and driving continuous improvement to enhance the resilience and sustainability of the aviation industry.



Stuart Fox
Director Flight Operations
IATA

Stuart Fox is the Director of Flight & Technical Operations at the International Air Transport Association (IATA), where he leads global teams responsible for flight operations, technical operations, and Air Traffic Management. In this role, he works closely with airlines, regulators, and industry stakeholders to enhance operational safety, efficiency, and global standardization across the aviation sector.

Prior to joining IATA, Stuart held senior leadership roles with the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority and the UK Civil Aviation Authority, where he led safety oversight teams and contributed to the development and implementation of regulatory frameworks. He brings more than 30 years of experience across airline and business jet operations, with deep expertise in crew training, regulatory affairs, line operations, and operational oversight.

Stuart holds an MBA in International Business from the University of Liverpool, UK. His extensive operational and regulatory background enables him to provide strategic leadership and practical insight on complex technical and safety challenges facing the global aviation industry.



Kayode Aridwodola
Director, Global Safety & Regulatory Partnerships
Boeing

Kayode Ariwodola is the Regional Director for Global Safety – Europe, Middle East and Africa, where he supports Boeing’s enterprise safety objectives by shaping and executing regional safety strategies aligned with global and state-level safety programs. He is based in Boeing’s Dubai, United Arab Emirates office.

Prior to this role, Kay served as Senior Engineering Manager for Maintenance Technologies and Operations within Boeing Commercial Airplanes Customer Support Engineering in Seal Beach, California. In this capacity, he led strategy development and execution for Global Aviation Safety’s Maintenance Operations Safety initiatives.

With over 20 years at the Boeing Company, Kay has held numerous engineering leadership roles supporting both commercial aircraft and military derivative programs, including responsibilities in aircraft design, testing and validation, and regulatory engagement.

He is a Senior Member of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics and a recipient of multiple engineering awards, including the 2015 Boeing Inventor Award. Kay holds a BSc in Aerospace Engineering and an MBA with a concentration in Global Marketing.



Emma Dayo
Senior Manager Ground Operations & Stakeholder Engagement
IATA

Emma Dayo is an experienced aviation professional with a strong background in air cargo, ground operations, and stakeholder engagement across Africa and the Middle East. She currently serves at the International Air Transport Association (IATA), where she works closely with airlines, ground handlers, regulators, and industry partners to support the development of safe, efficient, and resilient aviation operations across the region.

Emma has played an active role in advancing discussions on cargo standards, digital transformation, sustainability, and operational efficiency, and regularly represents IATA at industry forums and regional events. Her work focuses on addressing operational challenges, strengthening collaboration across the air cargo and ground handling ecosystem, and supporting the adoption of global standards tailored to regional needs.

She brings experience spanning cargo operations, ground handling, workforce development, and stakeholder alignment, and is a strong advocate for building future aviation talent in Africa. Emma holds a Bachelor's degree from Kenyatta University and is based in Kenya.



Henok Shegena
Manager Group SMS, Industrial safety and ERP
Ethiopian Airlines

An accomplished aviation safety and operations leader with expertise in IOSA/ISAGO audit coordination and the development of effective Safety Management Systems (SMS) across complex airline and ground operations.

Experienced in driving IOSA compliance, managing audit readiness, and aligning organizational practices with international regulations and industry standards.

Demonstrates strong capability in designing and enhancing SMS, Industrial Safety, and Emergency Response frameworks across flight operations, ground handling, maintenance, cargo, and corporate functions.

Well regarded for leading audit closures, conducting root cause analyses, and embedding corrective and preventive actions that strengthen compliance, resilience, and safety performance.

Currently works as a freelance consultant, supporting organizations in organizational design, change management, compliance systems, continuous improvement, training development, and coaching programs.



Rachael Ndegwa
Chief Executive Officer
Swissport Kenya

Racheal Ndegwa is an accomplished and innovative aviation executive with over 20 years of leadership experience in the industry. She currently serves as Chief Executive Officer and Director of Swissport Kenya, and Head of the East and Southern Africa region.

As one of the first female Kenyan CEOs in aviation, Racheal has built a strong reputation in ground handling, with expertise in operational excellence, business strategy, organizational growth, and regulatory compliance. Her leadership has driven optimized ground operations, enhanced service delivery, and successful business transformation initiatives.

Throughout her career, she has led high-performing teams, strengthened stakeholder partnerships, and introduced innovative solutions to improve efficiency and customer satisfaction. A strong advocate for talent development, Racheal is committed to empowering employees to reach their full potential.

In recognition of her impact and leadership, she was honored as Air Cargo Woman Leader of the Year 2025 by STAT Trade Times.



Capt. Gilbert Macharia Kibe
Managing Director,
Air Transport Consulting Ltd

Capt. Gilbert Macharia Kibe is the Managing Director of Air Transport Consulting Ltd, a firm dedicated to advancing the growth and development of the aviation sector in Africa through advisory and consulting services.

He previously served as Director General of the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA) from 2015 to 2022, overseeing the Authority's management and acting as Principal Advisor to the Cabinet Secretary responsible for civil aviation.

In 2022, Capt. Kibe served as Board Chairman of the Communications Authority of Kenya and was appointed a Single African Air Transport Market Pilot Implementation Project (SAATM-PIP) Ambassador for the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) Eastern Region.

He has also held several prominent international leadership roles, including Chairperson of the CANSO Executive Committee, ICAO RASG-AFI, ICAO AFPP Steering Committee, and EAC-CASSOA.

Currently, he serves on the boards of AMREF Flying Doctors and NCBA Insurance Company. Capt. Kibe holds an MBA in Aviation Management and brings over 45 years of extensive experience in the air transport industry.



Jon Howell
Chief Executive Officer & Founder
AviaDev Africa

Jon has dedicated more than 14 years to supporting the development of air connectivity to, from, and within Africa through the delivery of live and virtual industry events, alongside year-round content and market insight.

In 2016, he established AviaDev Africa, now widely recognised as the leading platform focused on fleet and route development on the continent, with nine editions delivered to date. In 2018, Jon launched AviaDev Insight Africa, the only podcast dedicated exclusively to African aviation, which has reached more than 140,000 listeners across 185 countries and produced over 365 episodes.

Passionate about developing future aviation leaders, Jon was appointed Visiting Professor at Coventry University in March 2022 and regularly lectures undergraduate and postgraduate aviation management students. He also contributed the preface and a chapter to *Strategies for Sustainable Air Services Development*, the first academic book dedicated to route development.

Beyond aviation, Jon is a Global Ambassador for Gorilla Conservation and actively supports fundraising initiatives, including major running challenges such as the 2026 London Marathon.

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