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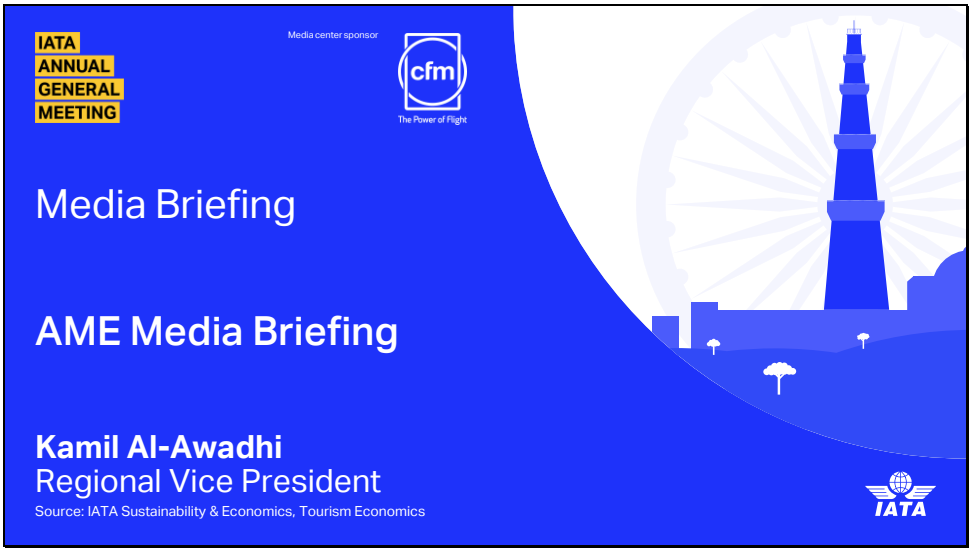
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Media Briefing
AME Media Briefing
Kamil Al-Awadhi
Regional Vice President
Source: IATA Sustainability & Economics, Tourism Economics
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Slide 2

Africa Market Performance – Year to Date

Passenger – Total Market				
Jan - April '25 v '24	RPK	ASK	PLF (%-pt)	PLF (level)
World	6.0%	5.4%	0.5%	81.8%
Africa	9.1%	7.3%	1.2%	74.5%

Cargo – Total Market				
Jan - April '25 v '24	CTK	ACTK	CLF (%-pt)	CLF (level)
World	3.4%	4.2%	-0.3%	45.1%
Africa	-5.5%	5.6%	-4.7%	40.1%

Source: IATA Sustainability & Economics, Tourism Economics

- **Global passenger** demand at 6.0%
- **Africa passenger** demand up 9% – higher than global
- **Global cargo** demand at 3.4%
- **Africa cargo** demand down 5.5%

- Good afternoon, I'll start with an economic overview of demand for Africa and Middle East.
- Looking first at passenger demand for Africa on a Year-to-Date basis, which compares January to April 2025 with January to April 2024, we note strong performance for Africa.
    - Passenger demand was up 9%, higher than the global average.
    - The picture for cargo is less positive, with demand down 5.5% and lower than global average.

Slide 3

Middle East Market Performance – Year to Date

Passenger – Total Market				
Jan - April '25 v '24	RPK	ASK	PLF (%-pt)	PLF (level)
World	6.0%	5.4%	0.5%	81.8%
Middle East	6.0%	4.1%	1.4%	80.7%

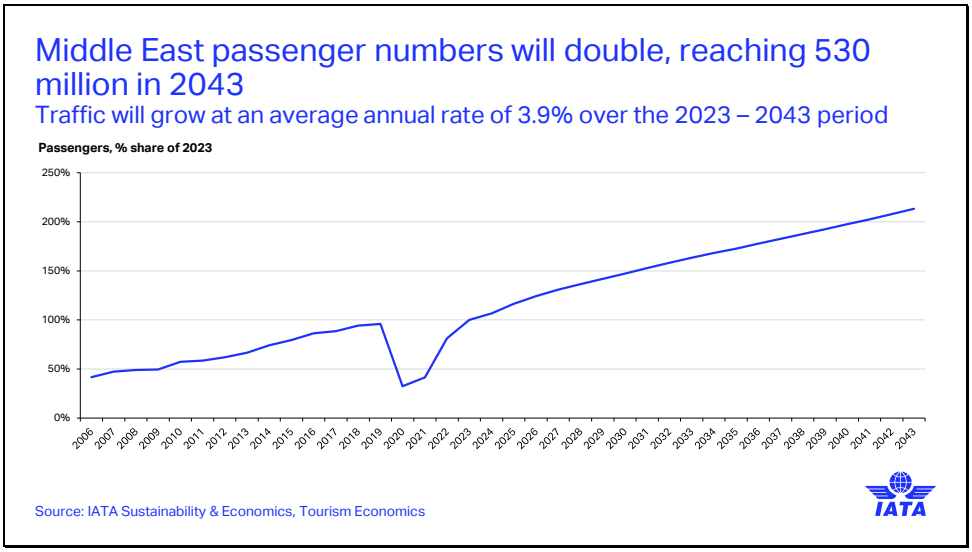
Cargo – Total Market				
Jan - April '25 v '24	CTK	ACTK	CLF (%-pt)	CLF (level)
World	3.4%	4.2%	-0.3%	45.1%
Middle East	-5.3%	0.3%	-2.6%	43.8%

Source: IATA Sustainability & Economics, Tourism Economics

- **Global passenger** demand at 6.0%
- **Middle East passenger** demand up 6%
- **Global cargo** demand at 3.4%
- **Middle East cargo** demand down 5.3%

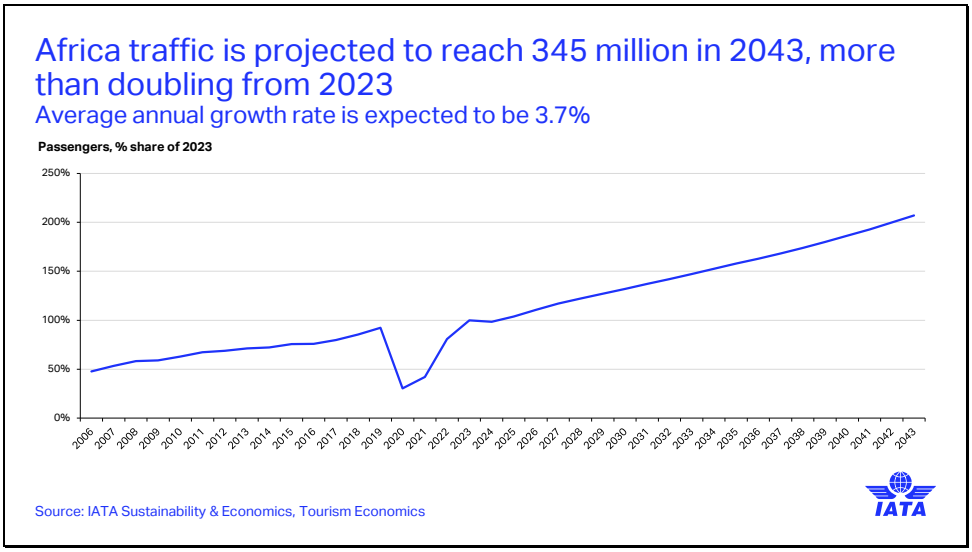
- Year to Date demand for Middle East, which compares January to April 2025 with January to April 2024, was up 6% in line with global average.
- Again, the YTD cargo performance for Middle East reflects some challenges – down 5.3%

Slide 4



- Middle East passenger numbers will double, reaching 530 million in 2043
- Traffic will grow at an average annual rate of 3.9% over the 2023 – 2043 period

Slide 5



- Africa passenger numbers will more than double, reaching 345 million in 2043
- Traffic will grow at an average annual rate of 3.7% over the 2023 – 2043 period

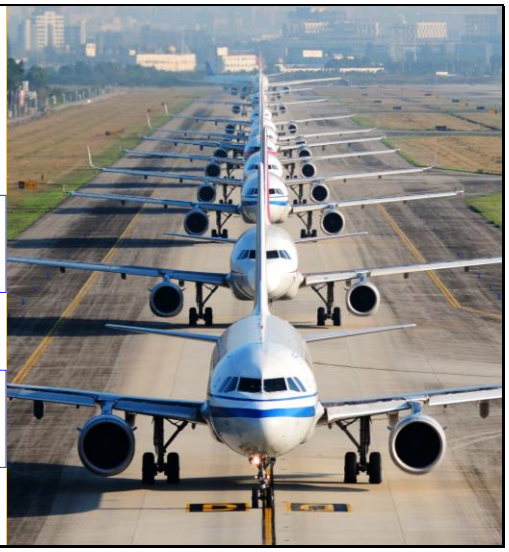
Slide 6

AME Priorities

Blocked Funds

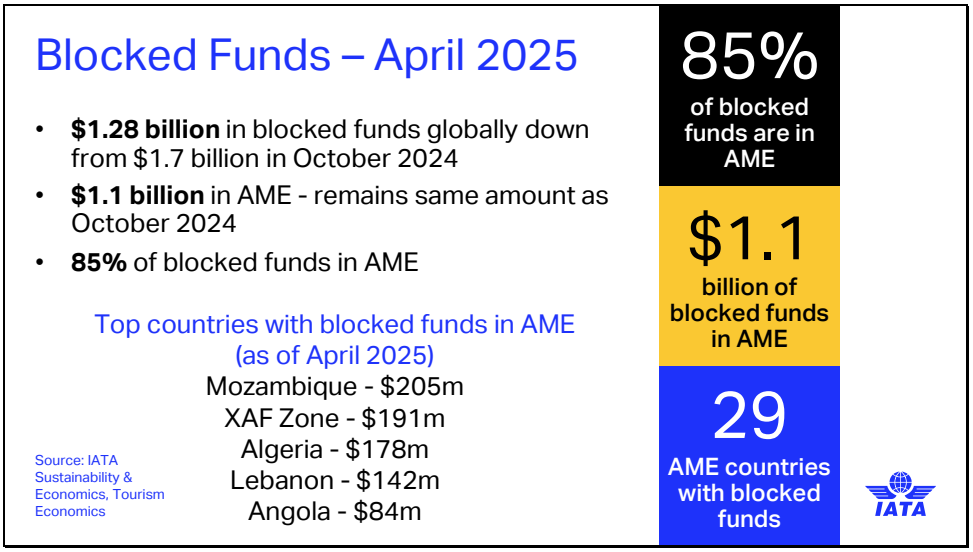
Safety

Source: IATA Sustainability & Economics, Tourism Economics



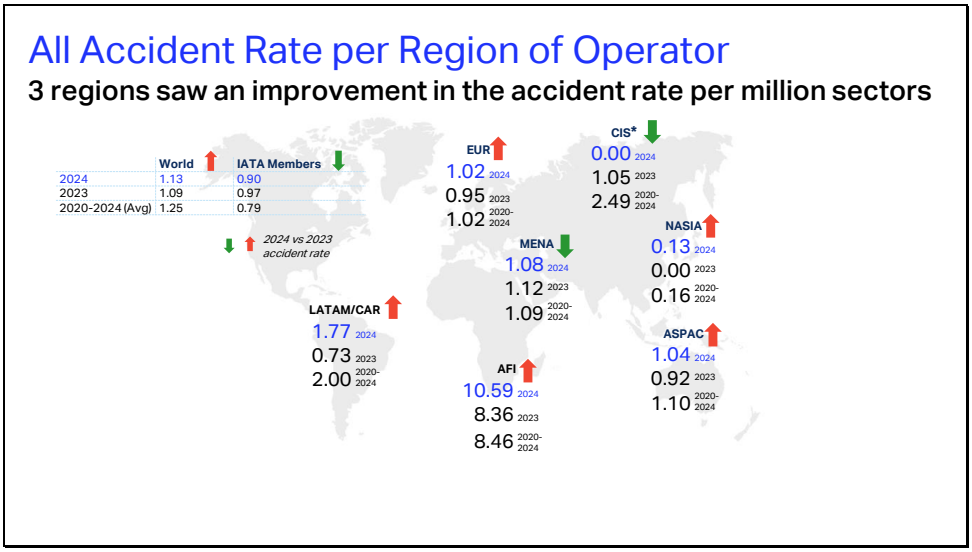
- Africa and the Middle East share two common priorities - blocked funds and safety

Slide 7



- Blocked funds remain a challenge in the region.
- As of April, globally, there is a total $1.28 billion in blocked funds.
- Of this, 85% is blocked in Africa and Middle East for a total of $1.1 billion, and out of that, $919 million is tied up in African countries.
- Significant improvements have been made in Nigeria, Egypt and Ethiopia over the last year, with Nigeria no longer on the list of blocked funds countries.
- However countries in AME continue to top the blocked funds list. Mozambique is currently withholding the largest amount of blocked funds globally, followed by the XAF Zone *(Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon)* and Algeria and Lebanon.
- Cash flow is key for airlines' business sustainability - when airlines are unable to repatriate their funds, it severely impedes their operations and limits the number of markets they can serve.
- Reduced air connectivity hampers countries' competitiveness, diminishes investor confidence and labels countries as a high-risk place to do business.
- Strong connectivity is an economic enabler and generates considerable economic and social benefits.
- We call on governments to prioritise aviation in the access to foreign exchange on the basis that air connectivity is a vital key economic catalyst for the country.

Slide 8



- Moving to safety

Global Overview:

- Considering the all-accident rate - the number of accidents per million flights (or "sectors"). It includes all types of accidents involving aircraft used for commercial passenger or cargo operations—whether minor or serious. It helps us measure how safe aviation is overall, and track how this changes from year to year or by region.
- The **global accident rate in 2024** was **1.13 per million sectors**, **up from 1.09 in 2023**. That means just over one accident for every million flights.
- While still below the 5-year average of **1.25**, the slight uptick is a reminder that **safety progress is not guaranteed**—and must be actively defended.
- Importantly, **IATA members** continue to outperform the global average with a **rate of 0.90**, reflecting the value of global standards, data sharing, and collective action.

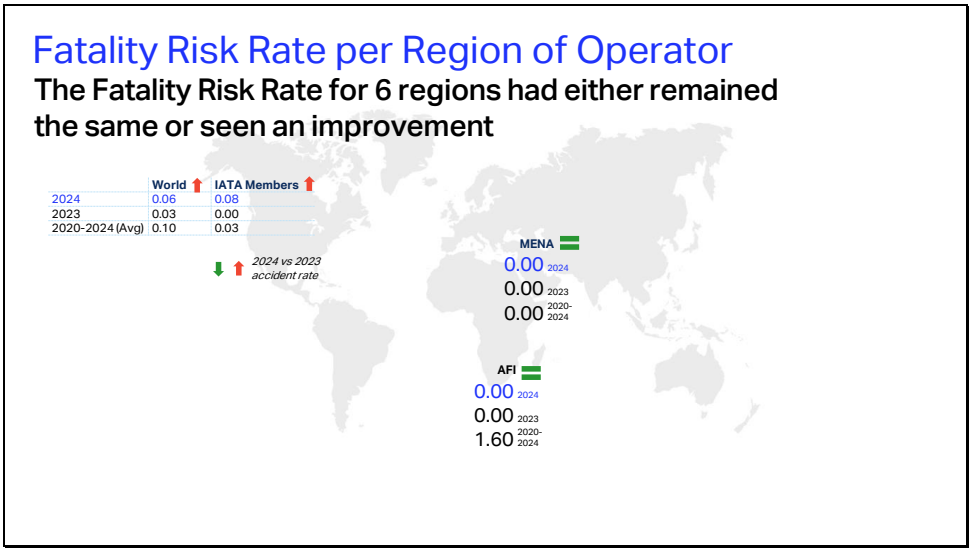
MENA Region:

- MENA saw a **positive trend**: the all-accident rate dropped from **1.12 in 2023** to **1.08 in 2024**.
- This improvement, although modest, reflects efforts to **strengthen oversight, standardize procedures, and invest in safety culture**.
- Continued collaboration between regulators, airlines, and ground operations teams is essential to sustain this momentum
- **For Africa,** there were 10 accidents in 2024, with the most common accident types being runway excursions, followed by those related to landing gear. Forty percent of all accidents involving AFI-based operators, were on turboprop aircraft.
- Through the IATA Focus Africa initiative, the Collaborative Aviation Safety Improvement Program (CASIP) continues to mobilize resources to address key safety challenges.
- **Geopolitical Tensions:** The region continues face challenges due to disruptions to aviation caused by geopolitical tensions.
- Regional Contingency Coordination activities remain a priority for the region.
- During the course of the year, IATA/ICAO established a series of Contingency Coordination Teams (CCTs) to ensure continuity of operations with robust contingency plans and routes established.

2024 /2025

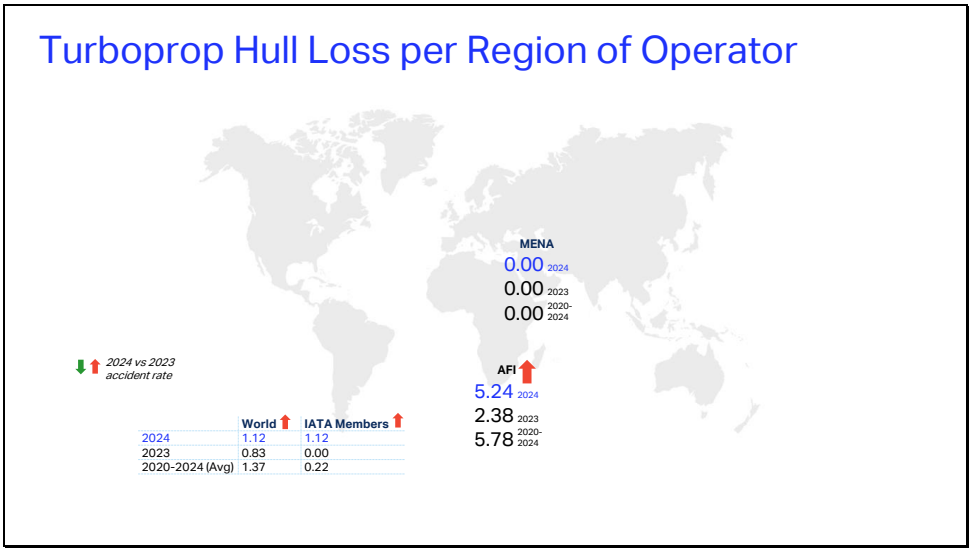
- Afghanistan CCT (currently active)
  - Airspace of the Kabul FIR
  - Initially avoidance then contingency routes established
- Khartoum FIR CCT – (currently active)
  - Airspace over Sudan and South Sudan impacted.
  - Avoidance then contingency routes established
- MID Region CCT – (currently active)
  - Iran/Israel airstrikes – closure of Amman, Baghdad, Tehran, Damascus and Lebanon FIRs
    - Followed by large scale traffic shifts even after airspaces were reopened
  - Pakistan/India airspace closures shifted large scale traffic through MID region FIR's
    - Pakistan/India CCT under the ASPAC region, however impact on airspace was mainly in MID region
- Goma CCT (FEB/MAR24)
  - Parts of the Kinshasa and Kigali FIR's impacted
  - CCT stood down, however there are still some airspace restrictions for operators registered in these countries. E.g. Rwandan registered aircraft or airlines with AOC in Rwanda may not use DRC airspace and vice versa.
- Iraq / Baghdad FIR (JUN24) – informal CCT
  - Türkiye restricted traffic arriving/departing certain airports in Iraq causing some traffic flow challenges. – no formal CCT was called but pre-amble activities.
- Somalia / Mogadishu FIR (FEB24) – Formal small CCT
  - Unlawful interference on ACC FREQ – airspace remained and still remains available.
  - Small CCT established to put mitigations in place, then was stood down once mitigations were effected.
- Iran / Tehran FIR (MAR24) Informal small CCT
  - Unlawful interference on ACC FREQ – airspace remained and still remains available
  - Small CCT formed to put mitigations in place, then was stood down once mitigations were effected.
- Algeria/Mali (no CCT)
  - partial closure of airspace over these territories depending on state of registry and DEP/DEST. E.g. Mali registered aircraft or airlines with AOC in Mali may not use Algerian airspace and vice versa. Mali also banned international traffic (regardless of state of registry) from overflying/landing Mali if they overfly or originate in Algeria.

Slide 9



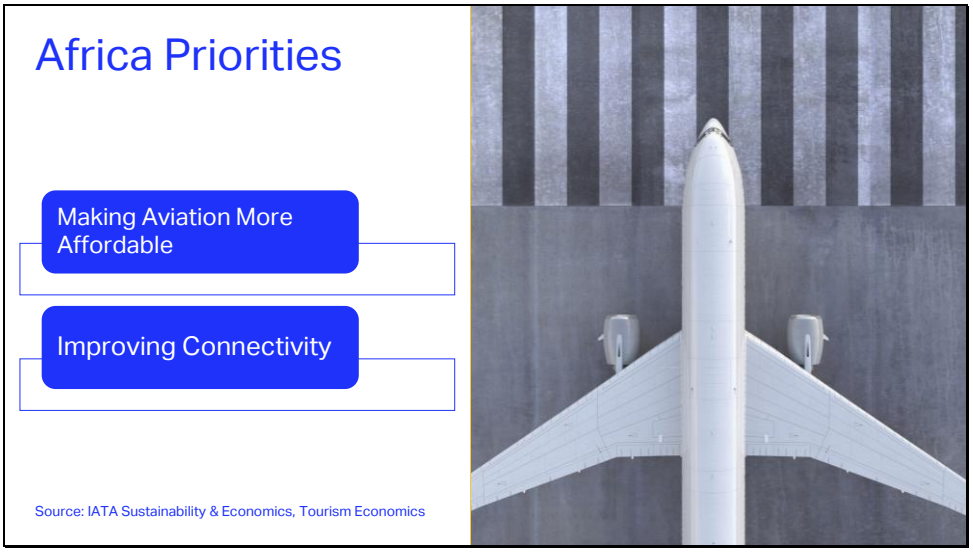
- Africa: the fatality risk remained at zero for the second year in a row.
- MENA: Fatality risk has remained zero since 2019.

Slide 10



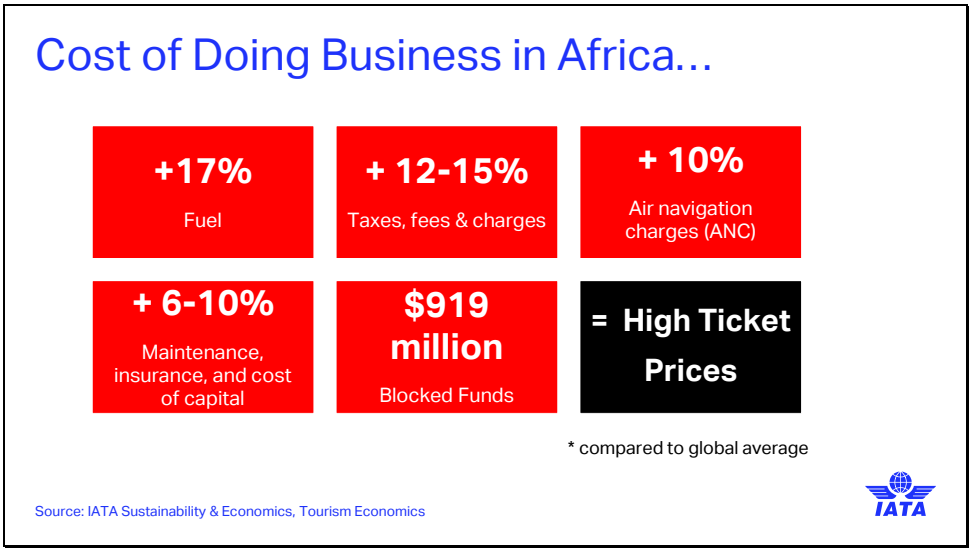
- MENA experienced no turboprop accidents in 2024.
- AFI experienced 5.24 per million sectors in 2024, a decline in performance from last year.
- The most common accident types in AFI in 2024 were runway excursions, followed by those related to landing gear.
- Through the IATA Focus Africa initiative, the Collaborative Aviation Safety Improvement Program (CASIP) continues to mobilize resources to address key safety challenges.

Slide 11



- If we zoom in on region specific priorities for Africa, we're focused on making aviation more affordable and improving connectivity.

Slide 12

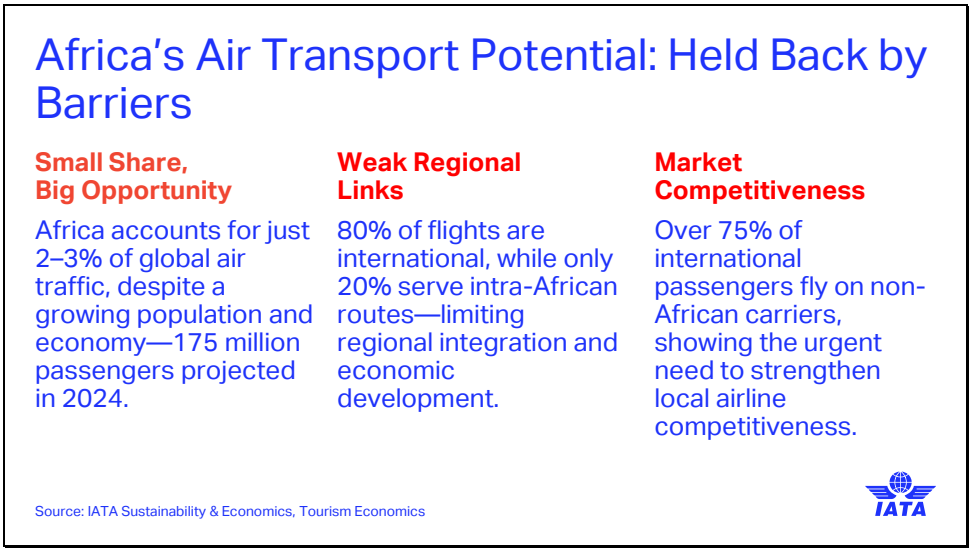


It's expensive to do business in Africa.

African airlines face unique cost challenges, particularly high operational costs, which are significantly higher than the global average. A few examples:

- **Fuel prices**: 17% higher than the global average, accounting for 40% of operating costs in Africa, compared to 25% globally (2024 data).
- **Taxes, fees & charges**: 12-15% higher than in other regions.
- **Air navigation charges (ANC)**: 10% higher.
- **Maintenance, insurance, and cost of capital**: 6-10% more expensive.
- **Blocked funds** : Africa currently accounts for 70% of the global blocked funds at $919 million out of $1.28 billion.

Slide 13



In addition to the high cost of doing business, Africa's aviation market faces challenges of access restrictions, limited competition and limited capacity.

- **Protectionist policies:** Restrictive bilateral agreements limit competition, reducing route availability and keeping fares high.
- **Limited Capacity**: Most African airlines are small operators with limited fleet sizes and route networks, lacking economies of scale to lower costs and become more competitive.
- **Limited connectivity:** Intra-African markets are relatively thin, with few airlines operating and limited service options, leading to higher fares. Only 19% of intra-African routes have direct flights, forcing passengers to take longer, costlier journeys.
- **Market Openness**: Slow implementation of African Union's Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) and the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) is a challenge.

Slide 14

Visa Openness

- **4 Champions of Mobility:** Benin, The Gambia, Rwanda, and Seychelles now welcome all Africans visa-free.
- **Borders Are Opening:** 28% of intra-African travel routes are now visa-free — up from just 20% in 2016.
- **Digital Progress:** 44% of African countries now offer e-visas — more than triple the 2016 figure.

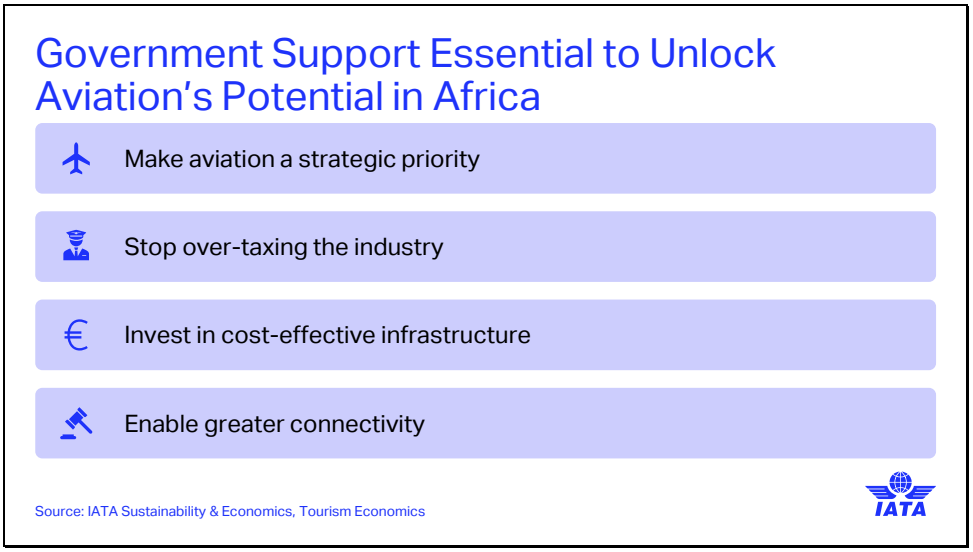
Source: IATA Sustainability & Economics, Tourism Economics

Notable visa policy improvements across Africa but more can be done to improve connectivity and ease of travel:

- Visa-Free Access for All Africans: As of 2024, four African countries—Benin, The Gambia, Rwanda, and Seychelles—offer visa-free entry to all African nationals. This policy underscores their commitment to enhancing intra-African mobility and integration.
- Visa-Free Travel Scenarios: In 2024, 28% of country-to-country travel scenarios within Africa allow African citizens to travel without a visa. This marks a significant improvement from 20% in 2016, reflecting progress in facilitating easier movement across the continent.
- Expansion of E-Visa Availability: By 2024, 26 African countries—representing 44% of the continent—have implemented e-visa systems accessible to African travelers. This is a substantial increase from just nine countries (17%) in 2016, indicating a positive trend toward digitalizing visa processes and improving accessibility. These developments highlight ongoing efforts to promote greater freedom of movement within Africa, which is essential for boosting trade, tourism, and regional integration.

**data from the 2024 Africa Visa Openness Index (AVOI), jointly published by the African Development Bank and the African Union Commission*

Slide 15



We urge governments to work in collaboration and consultation with industry when setting aviation policy.

Four priorities for governments to make aviation more affordable:

- Recognize aviation as a vital enabler of economic growth, regional integration, and social development.
  - *Ethiopia and Rwanda have made aviation a pillar of their economic development strategies. Investments in RwandAir and Kigali's airport and Ethiopian Airlines and Addis Ababa Bole International Airport have helped turned the countries into a regional hub and boosted tourism, trade, and investment. When governments see aviation as a strategic enabler, the results go far beyond the runway.*

- Avoid using aviation as a revenue source through excessive taxes and charges. It's a catalyst for trade, tourism, and jobs—not a cash cow.
  - *In some African countries, passengers pay more in taxes and fees than the base airfare itself. A $100 ticket can carry $60–$70 in charges—pricing out travelers and hurting demand.*

- Invest in efficient, scalable infrastructure that supports growth—without passing unsustainable costs to airlines and travelers.
  - *In Senegal, the new Blaise Diagne International Airport was built using a cost-efficient PPP model. It's modern, well-connected, and didn't overburden airlines with sky-high user fees.*

- Implement policies that facilitate access and cooperation, allowing more airlines to serve more routes and better connect communities.
  - *Under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), countries are beginning to align policies that could reduce barriers to air access. Yet only a handful have fully embraced the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM).*

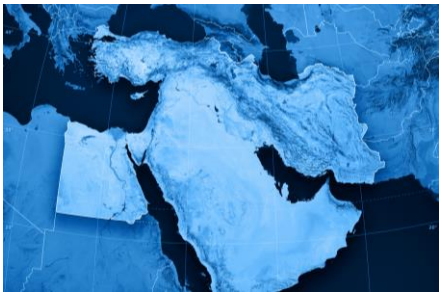
Slide 16

- Two priorities for the Middle East are focused on narrowing the aviation gap in the Middle East and regulatory harmonization.

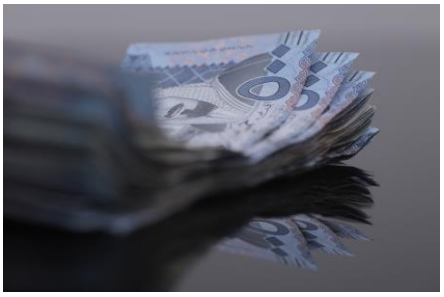
Slide 17

Aviation in Middle East is not developing evenly

Geopolitical Instability



Economic Disparity



Source: IATA Sustainability & Economics, Tourism Economics

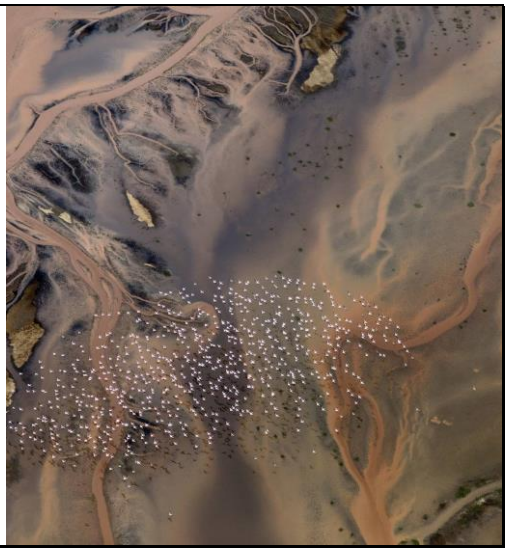
- Overall, the Middle East is doing well in aviation. But the reality is that the region is not developing evenly.
- **Geopolitical Instability:**
  - Ongoing conflicts in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Israel and Lebanon have resulted in prolonged airspace closures and significant disruption to flight operations. These conditions have weakened aviation infrastructure, eroded investor confidence, and limited access to critical markets.
  - Overflight restrictions, particularly around Iranian and Syrian airspace, have forced airlines to reroute—raising fuel consumption, increasing emissions, and extending flight times.
  - Conflict zones also hinder intra-regional connectivity, slowing economic integration and impeding the mobility of people and goods—especially in countries that would benefit most from enhanced air access.
  - Sanctions limit access to aircraft, parts, and finance—isolating some carriers from the global aviation system and hindering safety and growth.
  - GNSS
  - While aviation has shown remarkable resilience amid political uncertainty, its full potential is unlocked in environments that are stable, peaceful, and open to international engagement.
- **Economic Disparity**
  - The region contains some of the world's richest and poorest countries, with stark gaps in aviation capacity and investment.
  - Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states (e.g. UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia) have built world-class hubs and fleets with strong government backing.
  - In contrast, lower-income countries like Yemen, Lebanon, and Syria face declining infrastructure, underfunded civil aviation authorities, and outdated fleets.
  - A coordinated regional approach is essential to narrow the gap.

Slide 18

Regulatory Harmonization Opportunities

- Integrated Air Transport Market
- Fair and Proportionate Consumer Protection Regulations
- Maintenance and Safety Oversight Enhancement
- Cost-Effective And Timely Investment In Infrastructure Through Smart Regulations

Source: IATA Sustainability & Economics, Tourism Economics



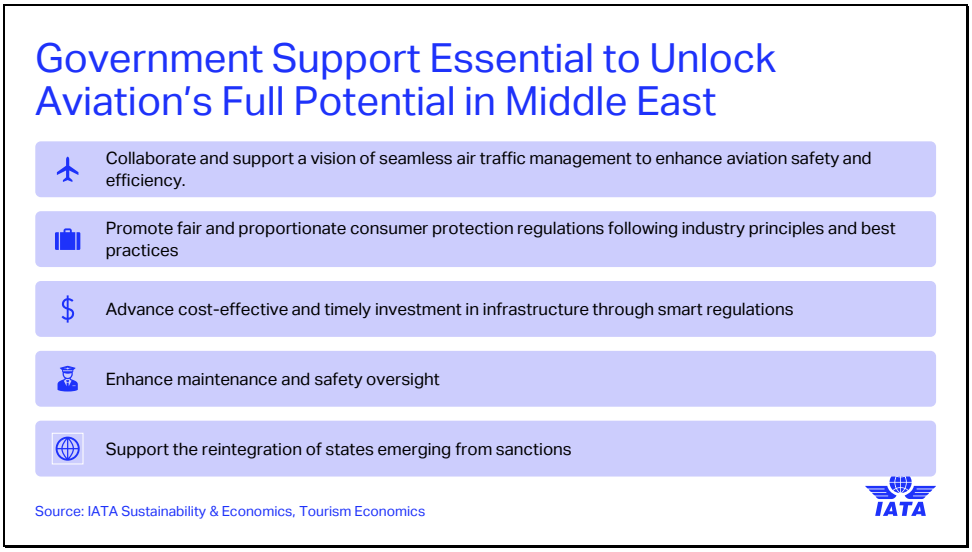
- **No Unified Air Transport Market in the Middle East: There is currently no overarching framework allowing airlines to operate seamlessly across the Middle East. A more coordinated approach could enhance connectivity, efficiency, and economic integration.**

- **Fair and Proportionate Consumer Protection Regulations**: Smart regulation that follows global best practices and industry standards is essential for aviation to thrive. Ineffective consumer legislation from Europe and the United States should not be imported. Consumer protection regulations must be fair and proportionate.

- **Enhancing Maintenance and Safety Oversight: Differences in national regulations for MRO operations mean that certifications obtained in one country may not be recognized in another. This lack of mutual recognition creates barriers for MRO providers seeking to operate across multiple Middle Eastern countries, leading to inefficiencies and increased costs.**

- **Cost-Effective And Timely Investment In Infrastructure Through Smart Regulations:** Airport and infrastructure development is guided by diverse economic regulation models. A regionally informed approach could help ensure infrastructure is cost-effective, scalable, and airline-friendly. A regulatory framework that balances ambition with economic sustainability is key. An example is Saudi Arabia's aviation transformation strategy which is driven by growth without overburdening operators.

Slide 19



There are varying degrees of prioritization of aviation in the Middle East. A unified and collaborative approach will support in bridging the gap between countries and strengthen the region's role in aviation.

Four priority areas to address are:

- **Evolve Towards a More Integrated Air Transport Market:** Foster greater regional collaboration on air service agreements to improve connectivity, reduce fragmentation, and enable more flexible route development.

- **Fair and Proportionate Consumer Protection Regulations:** Work towards a consistent baseline that follows ICAO principles, global industry best practices and standards of passenger rights across the region—ensuring travelers experience fair, transparent treatment no matter where they fly.

- **Advancing Cost-Effective And Timely Investment In Infrastructure Through Smart Regulations:** Promote infrastructure development that is cost-effective, scalable, and aligned with long-term traffic growth—ensuring airports and air navigation services remain accessible and affordable.

- **Enhance Maintenance and Safety Oversight:** Encourage mutual recognition of maintenance standards, training, and certifications to ensure consistent safety and support airline efficiency across borders.

- **Support the Reintegration of States Emerging from Sanctions**

Create pathways for the safe and structured return of states into the regional aviation system—facilitating access to aircraft, financing, and international standards while prioritizing safety and alignment.

Slide 20

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Q & A
Thank you
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