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AIRSPACE SAFETY IN AFRICA

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AIRSPACE SAFETY IN AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

The Chairman,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The African Airlines Association is greatly honoured to be availed this opportunity to address the eminent Ministers of Transport and other industry stakeholders on this conference aimed at the improvement of the air transport sector in Africa.

My presentation is on three major areas, namely;

- Air Space Safety in Africa
- Yamoussoukro Decision
- European Union External Air Transport Policy

AIR TRANSPORT SAFETY IN AFRICA

Safety is the number one priority in the aviation industry. All stakeholders in the industry need not only to live up to this principle, but to act in concept to ensure the highest possible level of safety.

Mr. Chairman, the rate of accidents in Africa is unacceptably high. This is creating a very negative perception of the aviation industry in Africa. It is for this reason that we are very grateful to the African Union for having convened this important conference where African Ministers of Transport and other stakeholders can put their heads together and come up with decisive solutions to the problem.

In this presentation, I will briefly discuss worldwide accident statistics followed by accident figures on the African continent outlining the main features of the accidents.

STATISTICS ON THE CONTINENT ARE BAD

Various publications have shown that Africa's accident statistics are poor in terms of hull loss and number of fatalities.

During the year 2005, there were 50 fatal aircraft accidents worldwide with 1107 fatalities. This compares unfavourably with the statistics for 2004 where there were 36 fatal aircraft accidents with 457 fatalities, an increase of over 140%. The ten major fatal accidents in 2005 are as shown on the screen.

Date	Aircraft Type	Operator	Fatalities	Location
16 Aug	MD 80	West Caribbean Airways	160	Venezuela
14 Aug	Boeing 737–300	Helios Airways	121	Greece
22 Oct	Boeing 737-200	Bellview Airways	117	Nigeria
10 Dec	DC-9-30	Sosoliso Airlines	108	Nigeria
03 Feb	Boeing 737-200	Kamair	104	Afghanistan
05 Sept	Boeing 737-200	Mandala Airlines	101	Indonesia
16 July	Antonov 24	Equatorial Express Airlines	60	Equatorial Guinea
23 Aug	Boeing 737-200	TANS	40	Peru
16 Mar	Antonov 24	Regional Airlines	29	Russia
25 May	Antonov 12	Victoria Air	27	DR Congo

Table 1: Major Aircraft Accidents 2005

From Table 1, you can see that 4 of the 10 worst accidents (in terms of fatalities) worldwide happened in Africa. The two recent accidents in Nigeria involved large numbers of people which significantly distorts the statistics for the continent. Currently, the AFI region accounts for over a third (34%) of all the accidents which is above the average we have registered in recent times. **The two accidents in Nigeria accounted for over 20% of the worldwide fatalities.**

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENTS IN AFRICA

Mr. Chairman, I move on to the total aircraft accidents in Africa in the ten-year period from 1996 to 2005. From this table on the screen, it is clear that Nigeria is among the countries with the highest accident rates on the African continent.

Country	Number of Accidents	% of Total
DRC	57	21.1
Angola	36	13.3
Sudan	32	11.9
Nigeria	25	9.3
Kenya	19	7.0
South Africa	9	3.3
Egypt	8	3.0
Gabon	7	2.6
Algeria	7	2.6
Rest of Continent	70	25.9
Total	**270**	**100**

Table 2: Accidents in Africa 1996 – 2005

The next Table shows the accident statistics in Africa in 2005.

Date	Country	Airline	No. of Fatalities	Aircraft Type
08 Jan	Uganda	Service Air	6	Antonov 12
03 Feb	Sudan	Air West	7	Ilyushin 76
23 Mar	Tanzania	Airline Transport	8	Ilyushin 76
05 May	DRC	Kisangani Airlift	10	Antonov 26
25 May	DRC	Victoria Air	27	Antonov 12
02 Jun	Sudan	Marshland Aviation	3	Antonov 24
16 Jul	Equatorial Guinea	Equatair	60	Antonov 24
05 Sep	DRC	Kavatshi Airlines	11	Antonov 26
09 Sep	DRC	Air Kasai	13	Antonov 26
21 Sep	DRC	Pan African Airways	2	Antonov 2
04 Oct	DRC	Wimbi Dira Airways	2	Antonov 12
22 Oct	Nigeria	Bellview Airlines	117	B737-200
10 Dec	Nigeria	Sosoliso Airlines	108	DC-9-30
24 Dec	Sudan	African Union	2	Antonov 28
Total			**376 (1107)**	

Table 3: Fatal Accidents in Africa 2005

It is apparent that the nature and pattern of accidents on the African continent are different from the ones that happened in Nigeria. Briefly, the main features of accidents on the continent are as follows:

a. Most accidents occurred in countries that were in conflict such as the DRC, Angola, Sudan and Liberia which accounted for about half of all the accidents in the ten-year period, 1996 to 2005. It is to be noted that since the cessation of hostilities in Angola in 2003 and the ban on the use of old aircraft from the former USSR in civil air transport services, the number of accidents dropped dramatically.

b. Aircraft from the former USSR are the ones largely involved in accidents, and in 2005, apart from Nigeria, all the accidents in the rest of the continent involved aircraft from the former USSR.

c. The majority of the accidents involved aircraft on charter or cargo operations or commuter/on request flights. The commuter aircraft were often flown on adventure flights by people from outside the continent because Africa lends itself to such kind of flying.

d. The accidents largely involved ageing aircraft, most of which were over 24 years old.

ACCIDENTS IN 2006

Mr. Chairman, 2006 has so far registered 15 fatal accidents with 180 fatalities and two of those are in Africa; namely 8 fatalities in the Democratic Republic of Congo and 3 in Uganda.

Date	Type	Operator	No. of Fatalities	Location
02 Jan	BAe-125	Evolga	3	Ukraine
21 Jan	Cessna 208	Sonic Blue Airways	3	Canada
24 Jan	Citation V	Goship Air	4	USA
05 Feb	Shorts 360	Air Cargo Carriers	3	USA
16 Feb	Citation 1/SP	Hasit	6	Iraq
18 Mar	Beech 99	Ameriflight	2	USA
24 Mar	Cessna 208	ATESA	5	Ecuador
28 Mar	Cessna 208	Cessna Aircraft	2	USA
31 Mar	Let 410	TEAM	19	Brazil
16 Apr	Fokker F27	TAM	1	Bolivia
23 Apr	Antonov 2	Rosto Shahty	4	Russia
27 Apr	Convair CV-580	LAC-Sky Cargo	8	DRC
28 Apr	Cessna 208	UN WFP	3	Uganda
3 May	A320	Armania	113	Russia
05 May	IAI Arava	Venezuela Ang	4	Venezuela
Total			**180**	

RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD

a. Consolidation

Most carriers in Nigeria largely operate the ageing aircraft types. Such aircraft cannot be considered unsafe as long as the proper maintenance is carried out.

However, older aircraft tend to break down more often. The skill levels, in some cases, may be inadequate to properly diagnose some faults. One way round this problem is to operate more modern aircraft types. Most low cost carriers in Europe and the United States operate brand new aircraft to benefit from low operating costs.

Modern state-of-the-art aircraft tend to cost many times the cost of an older generation type of aircraft. The small local operator often does not have the resources to acquire the modern equipment. However, consolidation within the current fragmented local airline industry would allow carriers to mobilize the required resources to acquire the more reliable, aesthetically appealing aircraft, which are much more economical to operate. Failure to consolidate soon enough is likely to result in the disappearance of some well known airlines from Nigerian airspace due to competition.

b. Membership of AFRAA/IATA

Airlines should be professional organizations and, as such, should be members of AFRAA or/and IATA. This would ensure that they are always aware of current developments in the industry and can benefit from interactions and networking with their counterparts in the industry. We strongly recommend that Nigerian airlines be, at least, members of AFRAA or both AFRAA and IATA.

Before consolidation as an industry, AFRAA is ready to provide collective services such as training, negotiation for cost-effective rates for for IOSA audits, group negotiation on e-ticketing and providing advice on how the industry can organize itself for cost-effective maintenance services. AFRAA can organize common maintenance of aircraft and related equipment with world class maintenance, repair and overhaul organizations such as Ethiopian Airlines or South African Technical at cost effective rates. Since many Nigerian carriers operate similar types of equipment, AFRAA can also facilitate the pooling of spare parts to reduce inventory costs.

c. Adoption of IOSA

In their efforts to improve airline safety standards, IATA came up with an IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA), which is a comprehensive check-list of all critical airline systems and activities which includes such aspects as updated manuals and an effective emergency procedure system, that should ensure that high quality of airline operational safety standards are maintained at all times.

IOSA is now recognized by airlines as an effective means to ensure that airline operations are safe. The holding of IOSA certification is also an effective public relations tool which an airline can use to demonstrate its commitment to world class levels of safety. Currently the domestic aviation industry in Nigeria is suffering from negative perceptions and one effective way round this, is the adoption of IOSA by all the airlines in the country.

AFRAA recognizes that the adoption of IOSA by the local airline industry involves significant costs. To alleviate the financial burden on the airlines, AFRAA is ready to organize a training programme on what is required for the IOSA pre-audit of the local airlines. AFRAA will be happy to be involved in group negotiations for the IOSA audits so that when the auditors come, they are able to carry out audits on all the airlines in the country rather than doing individual airline audits which can be costly.

d. Implement of ICAO Audit Recommendations

ICAO has conducted, in recent years, audits on the organization, human resources, and the performance of civil aviation authorities. These audit reports and recommendations are available. All proven deficiencies are documented in these reports. They must be used by the Ministry and Civil Aviation Authority in Nigeria to enable this country to take appropriate corrective measures to bring the country's aviation industry to world class standards.

e. Search and Rescue Services

It is evident, from the recent accident in Nigeria, that search and rescue services as well as the emergency response services need to be overhauled and significantly improved. Serious accidents have happened elsewhere but because of world class emergency response systems, hundreds of lives have been saved.

f. Autonomy of Civil Aviation Authorities

One of ICAO's persistent recommendations calls for the establishment of autonomous Directorates of Civil Aviation and ensuring that all charges levied from air transport are re-invested in the air transport sector so as to build up the necessary financial resources to enhance safety, train staff, carry out maintenance and acquire adequate equipment. I am not sure whether the national Civil Aviation Authority is effectively autonomous in this country and I have no doubt that this issue will be discussed at this workshop.

g. Regionalize Civil Aviation Authorities

In order to achieve effective autonomy of Civil Aviation Directorates vis-à-vis political authorities, it is recommended that they set up a sub-regional civil aviation authority. AFRAA supports such multinational authorities as this is likely to encourage professionalism in the issuance of licences to airlines or personnel.

LOSS OF SKILLED MANPOWER

Mr. Chairman, one major challenge facing the African airline industry is the continued and increasing loss of highly skilled people to airlines in the Middle East, Europe and elsewhere. This is a growing problem for African airlines which needs to be addressed so as to maintain world class standards of flight safety. The loss of skilled manpower is so serious in some airlines that some operations have been disrupted due to lack of manpower. Africa does not have the resources to replace the huge losses currently being experienced which might negatively impact on flight safety. African Governments and the aviation stakeholders need to come up with solutions to stop this brain drain.

African Governments, through the African Union, need to device a formula whereby there is compensation for the loss of highly skilled manpower to other countries outside the continent just as is practiced in the case of sports like athletics or football. This would ensure that Africa is compensated for the high cost of replacing the highly skilled people who are lost from the continent.

EUROPEAN UNION BLACKLISTING

Mr. Chairman, you are no doubt familiar with the recently announced European Union blacklist of 94 airlines world-wide of which 85 were on the African continent. This blacklist was done in a non-transparent manner and involved many airlines which are

paper airlines and do not fly at all, let alone fly to the EU. Almost all the airlines concerned do not have operations to the European Union which gives the impression that the intentions behind coming up with the blacklist was to tarnish the image of all African airlines for the purposes of putting African airlines at a competitive disadvantage for the benefit of European airlines. The African Airlines Association is vehemently against the publication of such a blacklist and instead welcomes the decision of the Director Generals of Civil Aviation Authorities to publicize the results of the ICAO Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme which, we believe, is a much more transparent and fair way of highlighting States which are not carrying out their safety oversight responsibilities seriously.

CONCLUSIONS

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have outlined some of the common challenges we face on the continent in general and in Nigeria in particular. We have shown that aircraft accidents in Africa and in Nigeria, in particular, are unacceptably high. There is need to reassure the traveling public of the importance which we as an industry place on the highest standards of safety.

We need to show by our actions that we mean what we say. We have to work together as an industry, with the support of all the stakeholder including airports, civil aviation authorities and airlines to ensure that we have a safe and secure air transport industry. The recommendations we have suggested should go a long way to ensuring that airline operations are safe.

It is our duty to conclude this workshop with a clear vision and action plan that can help the Ministry of Aviation and the Federal Republic of Nigeria to successfully tackle the current aviation safety issues in Nigeria.

I wish us all a very successful workshop.