



## AfBAA Regional Symposium 2015 in Addis Ababa

The third Regional Symposium held by the African Business Aviation Association (AfBAA) saw two days of dynamic debate and discussion produce a vast selection of new ideas and suggestions to develop Business Aviation in Africa. The event, which welcomed around 100 dignitaries, delegates and speakers from the sector was held in Addis Ababa, 24th and 25th September, and proved to be the liveliest of the symposia yet.

### **Keynote Speeches:**

Mr. David Kajange, Head of Transport and Tourism delivered a keynote speech on behalf of the African Union's Infrastructure and Energy Department. Mr. Kajange acknowledged the growth of air transport and its importance in connecting trade, confirming that small and medium traders make up most of the passenger numbers. He added the African Union is actively pursuing open sky initiatives to support a more cohesive aviation network that will establish a single air transport market by 2017. With a nod to AfBAA's ongoing mission to advocate the importance of Business Aviation Mr Kajange acknowledged that whilst Business Aviation has not received as much attention as commercial aviation from the AU it acknowledged its importance as a growth factor for the continent which is currently experiencing economic growth at around 5% per annum. In summing up Mr Kajange said "it would be necessary for AfBAA to pursue a vigorous advocacy campaign to highlight the benefits of business aviation to corporate managers, policy-makers and regulators in Africa. This is a good beginning and key step in bringing business aviation to the attention of African policy-makers."

The Ethiopian Minister of Transport, HE. Minister Workneh Gebeyehu echoed some of Mr Kajange's points, but at a national level. He went on to explain how Ethiopian Airlines has become one of Africa's most successful carriers, aided by governmental support. The government is assisting new aviation entrants in Ethiopia and is committed to making infrastructure improvements. This includes the development of 20 international level airports within the next five years. He thanked AfBAA for hosting the conference in Addis Ababa saying the timing was most relevant as the government was currently looking at "how to alleviate major problems posed for the operation of air transport services in Ethiopia."

AfBAA's Founding Chairman, Tarek Ragheb welcomed the positive approaches from the governmental dignitaries confirming delegates that the theme of education continues to thread through AfBAA's activity. He stressed that the education of governments was as important as the education of stakeholders in the industry. Building on comments made by Mr Kajange about the need to develop African aviation across the board Ragheb also announced the launch of the ABAS, (African Business Aviation Show) an annual show dedicated to business aviation which will run in parallel with Aviation Africa the recently launched commercial aviation exhibition and conference. Making the announcement

Ragheb said, “Many of the same concerns, affect commercial and business aviation. We recognized that similar issues are cropping up across the board and by bringing delegates together from both sectors we can provide an opportunity for them to learn from each other.”

## **Operator’s Panel**

Emphasising the need for education the Operator’s panel outlined the issues still facing the industry across the continent. Panelists noted that a real lack of understanding still exists across the network of CAAs and that business aviation is often incorrectly perceived as the domain of the rich, lucky or governmental officials. This lack of understanding stretches to the handlers who are used to taking care of large airliners. Susan Mashibe of Via Aviation, Tanzania, explained how she is tackling the problem by training her team to recognise these differences and manage VIP clients correctly. She suggests other businesses implement this practice. Agreeing that regulators lack understanding of the business she also ensures that they are constantly informed about what is happening in the handling process. She is also collaborating with a US company to share knowledge about mechanics and engineering. The collective lack of education is an issue the panel said must be addressed and this knowledge-sharing concept is one to be encouraged for the future. Solomon Gizaw MD of local operator Abyssinian Aviation Services argued that Africa must look at itself and say: “What are we doing wrong, what can we improve?” and that through this approach, “respect from the rest of the world will be gained.”

Operators are still stymied by familiar issues with customs departments often holding up parts, heavy tax levies being applied to private aircraft, and a lack of contingency stock available for unpredicted maintenance requirements. Jonathan Deutsch of maintenance programme provider JSSI noted that West Africa is jet driven whilst east Africa is the domain of the Turboprop and suggested that OEMs need to make contingency stocks reflecting this split. JSSI are also advocating for greater education around MRO in Africa. Permissions are still a challenge, but again the genesis for this is in the lack of understanding of the sector by the regulators.

## **Safety and Training Panel**

The safety and training panel ignited much debate about audits. Evaluating safety is a prime concern for aviation internationally, but in Africa the panel argued more than anywhere you have to show what you are capable of and what you’ve committed to. How you run your operations will demonstrate this. Laurie Moore of Litson Associates recommended that a standard international audit system could work best and help all stakeholders. The current system, which sees oil companies, auditors, regulatory bodies, all requiring different levels, making the process expensive in terms of time, investment and operations. Michael Grüninger of Switzerland-based aviation consulting company GCS says that safety management systems are essential. “SMS forces us to think about who we are, what we want and how we want to achieve it. Customers are slowly waking up and becoming more conscious that the greybeard trusted captain at night somewhere in the bush, is not enough anymore. They know that behind personal skills there are organizational factors affecting the outcome of a flight. That’s why organisations increasingly request the audits.” There was a suggestion that the CAAs State Safety Programmes were often way behind and that operators should lead the way. However it was acknowledged that African safety standards are improving and that as with the rest of the world you can be as safe as you like but often clients will buy on price alone.

## **Medical Evacuation Presentation:**

The themes raised by the operators and safety panel were exemplified in a new presentation topic for this year when Volker Lemke of FAI, the air ambulance specialist spoke about the challenges of operating across the continent. The company, which so far in 2015 has conducted over 800 missions of which around 125 were from Africa, faces operational and safety issues on a daily basis. Permits, landing permissions, maintenance challenges, inconsistent regulations and general non-understanding of what Medical Evacuation (Medevac) is by local authorities creates a series of problems for Medevac operators. In conjunction with fellow Medevac operator Phoenix Aviation, Lemke called for AfBAA to create a brief that can be shared with CAAs that outlines what Medevac means and encourage specific parameters to deal with the issues.

## **Oil at \$40 a Barrel Panel:**

With much of Africa's burgeoning Business Aviation sector originating in the hydrocarbon industry a panel dedicated to the \$40 barrel stirred up debate. The panel argued that yes it's affected the industry but not necessarily in the way people think. As an operator oil prices don't tend to reduce just because the barrel price goes down. Infrastructure, delivery, storage, location, quality control costs and government levies all affect the price. In fact in some countries the government fixes the pricing, not the more familiar Platt structure operating in the rest of the world. There has been no clear uptick in charter flights consequently. However in oil producing nations, noticeably Nigeria the amount of charters decreased as the oil companies lowered the volume of flights required. The outcome of oil pricing is that companies still need to move their staff, assets, and executives around and in Africa the need for air transport remains essential. What is really needed by the industry is stability of pricing, currency and economies of scale. The price of oil is political, just as much as it is about the commodity it was suggested. A call was made for AfBAA to lead the way in developing a clearer, comprehensive and transparent fuel release system for business aviation as cash is not welcome and bank movement of moneys can be unpredictable.

## **Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) Presentations:**

A much anticipated session at the symposium was inspiring as Katy Glynn of Trident Group introduced the topic of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. Admitting that the term "drone" has negative connotations associated with military missions she showcased the positive uses for UAV, arguing that really they should be called "Flying Computers" as it can collect extensive data from the air. Arguing her case she explained that these machines have many valuable uses citing; UAVs delivering defibrillators and medical supplies in difficult to access locations. She went on to state further examples where UAV's were being successfully used to complete tasks such as planting 1 billion trees a year; or acting as quality control data storage for agriculture, pipelines, aerial mapping, and surveillance. "For precision agriculture this is a huge developmental opportunity," she stated explaining a central value of the machine for Africa. Rosa Rubio of Paisajes Gallegos explained the definitions behind the machines with three different weight classes differentiating the operational possibilities of each class. Addressing the security concerns she argued Europe is creating legislation around the use of UAVs. A key concern for delegates was the threat to aircraft operators. Glynn stated that research showed that manned vehicles are the best way of accumulating qualitative data and that unmanned vehicles are the solution for areas that are inaccessible for fixed wing and rotary machines. Acknowledging there may be some attrition she also argued that the market for aerial support would be widened by the impact of the UAV potential applications. Supporting one of AfBAA's key themes she said business' needs

data and UAVs are the perfect source for cost effective data collection and called for AfBAA to welcome UAV operators as members.

### **Security Presentation:**

Trident Group's CEO Thomas Rothrauff elaborated on the concept of security. Whilst safety of operations is a given, the benefits of security operations are often misunderstood. Delegates heard about how functional security control needs to be an expansive and inclusive operation that addresses aviation security from the perimeter fence to the top of the Air Traffic Control Tower. He argued that security vulnerabilities are global and that similar issues affect airports around the world, not just in Africa. There are many elements to consider around aircraft operations - who is handling the aircraft, what are their security procedures; FBO security who accesses what, and how have they been vetted; movements of airport and aviation connected vehicles and people offsite as well as who is tracking them and most importantly, the areas where the points of impact for security breaches are greatest, for example, airport entrances. Particularly vulnerable points are field-based equipment, empty aircraft, control towers and airport services provided by a wide range of suppliers. He suggested that African security should operate within international compliance standards which requires knowing the service providers as well as the local security plan for the area in addition to intelligence reporting, establishing security credibility, relationship building, long term presence, scalability, and response capability. Assessing threats is important, but having the capability to deal with them is even more so.

### **Tracking Technologies Panel:**

A specific element of security is the ability to track an asset whether that be the aircraft itself or the people on it. A young company from New Zealand called Spidertracks has developed a cost effective solution designed for smaller aircraft. Similar in size to a mobile phone the tracking device is connected to the Iridium Satellite network giving real time global coverage. The tidy little black box reports real time locations; enables flight tracking and can issue SOS calls. All of the tracking can be monitored from tablets or smartphones making it a low cost alternative to the inbuilt satellite connectivity found on the mid to heavy jet market. The cost can be as little as \$1,000 and with Africa not as well equipped as the rest of the world for search and rescue the live tracker is a good enabler for an emergency response plan. For bush pilots, safari flights, or agricultural services it provides an invaluable resource. For larger size aircraft Satcom Direct provides a high tech function, which enables pilots to manage full flight deck communications and corporate fleets with real time tracking. It also provides data analysis of the aircraft's performance. For corporate fleets it monitors the assets to provide useful data for future planning. Undoubtedly tracking is a hot topic and on a continent like Africa where there is a lot of inhospitable territory the argument to include flight tracking equipment in aircraft specification is strong.

### **The Future of Charter Brokers:**

There is an on-going international debate about the value of brokers in the market. There are arguments for and against and recent years have seen a number of disruptive business models enter the space. The most recent is JetSmarter. It's an app that allows members who have joined the service to access empty legs from a wide number of business aviation operators. With a scalable model the more operators participating means better value deals for members. Paul Grusevich from JetSmarter says that the aim of the app has been to simplify the booking process, making executive aviation available to a wider audience. Debate ensued with Mark Abbot of Vertis Aviation South Africa, a boutique charter brokers arguing that when clients are parting with significant sums of cash they want to deal with a

real person, not an app. “Brokers are actually more useful when things go wrong”. Arguing that people buy people he says that brokers can cope with complex logistical issues and rectify situations that an app wouldn’t recognise, for example a change of plan, number of people, overwhelming luggage volumes, unpredicted weather changes, food handling requests that change just half an hour before take off. Similar to the UAV verses human debate JetSmarter is suggesting that the broker could become obsolete as their service also provides concierge and ground services. Comparisons were made with the low cost carrier where as long as you play by their rules your trip will be fine, however the minute you step outside their framework then travel can become complex, stressful and even fail in its mission to deliver you from A to B. It was agreed there can be a place for the technically driven charter market but people like dealing with other people when transacting large sums of cash.

### **Data & Research Presentation:**

Data collection remains key to the long-term sustainability of business aviation in Africa. Patterns, trends, demand, can all be monitored by data. Again, as with the Flying Computers from the UAV panel, Richard Koe of WINGX the data aggregation company, argued that it was essential to source up to date data about business activity in Africa in order to help the sector in Africa prosper on a continued basis. His company successfully produces European based reports on aircraft movement and has been able to replicate this in North Africa. He presented existing data on North Africa using Morocco as an example to demonstrate what the company does in terms of information generation and how it can be used to anticipate usage, future up lift and activity. He wanted to encourage African Business Aviation companies to submit data to WINGX through AfBAA to help create figures across the country. As transparency continues to be a challenge he says WINGX can help by creating data that is useful and meaningful to all stakeholders. He asked the audience to participate and encouraged them to share data and information so that it can be analysed and used to predict future opportunities. His idea was to have an activity dashboard, with a consistent format, that all members could use to submit five or six key points. This information from operators, FBOS and, aircraft owners has the potential to be an invaluable asset for AfBAA members. Data is important as it continues to give value to economies and improve the lives of people living in Africa.

### **SMS Workshop**

The symposium finished with an SMS workshop presented by Laurie Moore of Litson and Associates and Michael Grüninger of GCS who worked with twenty five delegates through a three hour session covering the basics of Safety Management System implementation, explaining its importance as a valuable investment for any business. Attending delegates were given an examination at the end and those that passed were presented with a certificate of attendance.

The meeting was lively and full of debate with fruitful discussions and expert based knowledge sharing. Chairman Alan Peaford commented: “it’s very clear that AfBAA is on the move.” Action is being taken, new topics are being brought to the fore and African Business Aviation remains on an upward trajectory in terms of development, understanding and expansion. The key message taken from the event was on the need for **awareness** at all levels, making the CAAs aware, the stakeholders, the regulators, the governments and the media about what motivates Business Aviation and what the benefits of supporting and developing the sector are for business, nations, and the continent.