

SPEECH AFRAA AGA OPENING CEREMONY

Chairperson of the African Airlines Association

Secretary General of the African Airlines Association

Director General and CEO of IATA

CEO of Air Mauritius

Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Dear Delegates

Members of the Press

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcome to Mauritius and welcome to the AFRAA Annual General Assembly.

We hope that you have settled in and ready for a productive AGA. First of all, we would like to thank AFRAA for having given us the opportunity to host this high profile summit in Mauritius. We are also honored that Air Mauritius has been designated to represent the East African region on AFRAA's Executive committee. We are determined to make a positive impact and contribute to further the agenda of AFRAA.

Air connectivity has greatly contributed to the development of our country which makes Mauritius a perfect example of the impact that aviation can have on the economy of a small island developing state.

The Mauritian experience also highlights the importance of a national airline as Air Mauritius has been an indissoluble partner of our country's economy since independence. We are still the leading airline serving the destination with a 40 to 50% share of passenger traffic to and from Mauritius.

Air connectivity has been central to the development of many local economic sectors including travel and tourism which has a direct, indirect and catalytic contribution of 23.6% to our GDP. This represents USD 3 billion in terms of economic activity and 110,000 jobs, which is roughly around 23% of the Mauritian workforce.

More than ever, the vision of a future Mauritius rests upon connectivity - be it air links, maritime links or digital connectivity. As a result, the national airline of Mauritius is called upon to play an increasingly important role in building our country's future as an enabler of growth.

However, this can only be envisaged within the broader regional and African context. The role that we ambition to play on the continent and in the region are therefore key ingredients of our airline's future plans.

The AFRAA AGA has brought together leading industry CEOs and decision makers from across Africa. We all have similar preoccupations and this creates

a conducive environment for us to ponder on how best to harness the full potential of Africa's aviation.

In the last 30 years Africa's population has almost doubled to more than 1.2 billion. Africans make up 12% of the world's population, but only 2.5 % of the world's passengers. The populations of 26 African countries are expected to double by 2050 which all point to the vast potential and untapped opportunities across our continent.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The theme of our Annual General Assembly is to 'Achieve success in an integrated and interconnected Africa'.

Most of us agree that in order to achieve this, a major paradigm shift is required; not only among key players, but also among all stakeholders within the continent's aviation ecosystem.

The challenges that we face can only be addressed collectively.

Africa's overarching priority is its standard of safety and security. African countries also need to invest in infrastructure to prepare for growth. Policies need to be aviation 'friendly' and cater for the specific realities of our different regions. Access to capital should be improved.

Adoption of innovation and technology should be accelerated so that the aircraft we operate and the digital customer experience we provide live up to global standards. In order to deliver on these various dimensions, Africa requires skilled manpower for which we will need to invest in training and development. Brain drain needs to be contained.

Last but not least, improved collaboration among African airlines is probably the single most urgent target we must set for ourselves because alone, no African airline will successfully overcome the hurdles of scale and the high cost base that are holding back the African aviation industry.

Allow me therefore to once again stress that an African airline Alliance is long overdue.

Let us all put our heads together and make it happen and let's make the most of the various forums that have been set up to address all these important issues.

I wish you all a fruitful summit.