NEWS RELEASE

Airlines Association of Southern Africa calls time on talk, urges execution to turn potential into aviation growth

9 October 2026. Mauritius – Africa must move decisively from ambition and talk to execution, if aviation is to fulfil its potential as a catalyst for intra-African trade, tourism and economic growth, Airlines Association of Southern Africa (AASA) CEO, Aaron Munetsi, told delegates at the organisation's 56th Annual General Assembly (AGA) in Mauritius today.

Mr Munetsi said Africa's young, dynamic and rapidly expanding population represented an enormous opportunity not only for aviation but for economic growth and inclusion. He noted that the industry continued to operate well below its potential. World Bank and OECD studies predict around 300 million people will represent Africa's growing middle class by 2030, driving demand for air travel to, from and within the continent.

"We need to design aviation around reasonably priced flights that depart and arrive on time, with convenient business-oriented schedules, that can be purchased using frictionless digital payments compatible with mobile money, offering products suited to traders as well as tourists, using efficient airports and border processes," he explained.

He warned that Africa can no longer afford the gap between strategies and implementation and as such the aviation sector must lead the charge for intolerance of this anomaly.

"The industry and governments have spent decades discussing the challenges facing African aviation and commissioning consultants to provide expensive strategies only to leave them unimplemented. Strategies don't move people. Now it is time to make the difficult decisions and execute them," said Mr Munetsi.

In calling on industry stakeholders, governments and regulators to move beyond discussion and deliver measurable action, AASA identified five urgent and measurable action items to stimulate sustainable growth in Africa's passenger and air cargo sector:

1. Make safety non-negotiable with investments in resources, effective oversight, training and zero tolerance for shortcuts.
2. Contain costs and reign-in aviation-related taxes, fees and charges and avoid introducing new ones.
3. Modernise and maintain airports and other aviation infrastructure for efficiency and apply affordable user-charges for those services.
4. Eliminate anti-competitive and protectionist restrictions on market access and implement the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM). Liberalisation must move beyond declarations and become a practical reality.
5. Standardise regulations, recognise licences and harmonise procedures across borders.

Munetsi stressed that the value generated by aviation extends far beyond the airlines themselves.

"Efficient air connectivity increases trade, passenger traffic and tourism while helping Africa trade more effectively with itself. Aviation does not just deliver passengers. We deliver the catalytic effect to economies." he said.

About AASA

AASA represents most of the airlines in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) bloc on matters of common interest relating to government policies, legislation, regulations, planning, operational efficiency, safety, security, taxes, charges, and other matters affecting its Members' sustainability, and the provision of affordable and accessible air transport throughout the region.

AASA was established in 1970 and currently has 15 Airline Members and 42 Associate Members, including infrastructure service providers, aircraft and engine manufacturers and other industry suppliers, ground handling companies and allied industry bodies.

AASA is a participant and contributor to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) forums and supports their initiatives in the region.

Media Queries
Linden Birns – Plane Talking
PR & Media Relations Advisor to AASA
M: +27 82 568 8031
linden@icon.co.za