THE AFRICAN AVIATION SAFETY & OPERATIONS SUMMIT

Championing Africa Aviation Safety Together

Theme: Championing Africa Aviation Safety Together

Summary and Recommendations

The African Airlines Association (AFRAA) and Flight Safety Foundation jointly organised the inaugural African Aviation Safety and Operations Summit on May 15, 2024, in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia.

The one-day summit, themed "*Championing Africa Aviation Safety Together*," aimed to promote and improve safety standards within the African aviation sector. It brought together aviation stakeholders to discuss, strategise, and collaborate on shaping a safer future for African aviation. The summit addressed various aviation safety and operations facets, offering stakeholders a forum to discuss and exchange best practices.

The summit commenced with a snapshot of the region's aviation safety landscape and focussed on the strides made and challenges addressed, along with a roadmap for sustaining and advancing safety in African skies. While the African aviation industry's safety performance has improved in recent years, more progress is needed to achieve global safety targets. Indeed, the absence of accidents does not necessarily mean the presence of safety.

Participants were presented with data on accidents and serious incidents to highlight high-risk categories in the region, prompting panellists to collectively explore and address underlying factors driving safety trends in African aviation. The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) global and regional high-risk categories remain a significant concern for Africa, especially regarding runway excursions, with eight occurrences reported since the start of 2024.

The summit focussed on safety culture and organisational leadership, examining the role of leadership in fostering a robust safety culture within aviation organisations. This included promoting open reporting systems, learning from incidents, training, and encouraging continuous improvement. Participants stressed the importance of a safety culture in ensuring safe operations in any organisation, emphasising the need to prioritise safety as a core value throughout an organisation, from leadership to frontline workers.

Throughout the one-day summit, participants exchanged numerous insights on the day's topics, issues, and challenges. They discussed how brainstorming could improve safety and bolster resilience in addressing ICAO global and regional high-risk areas.

Participants called for more collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders to effectively implement safety requirements and best practices, including using technology and automation, which are crucial for ensuring safety, efficiency, and growth in the aviation industry.

Some other predominant challenges highlighted were in the following areas:

- ❖ Air navigation infrastructure safety and airports infrastructure safety;
- ❖ Capacity/capability of safety oversight bodies;
- ❖ Lack of effective safety data collection/information sharing, data-driven safety management; and,
- ❖ Investigation of all accidents and serious incidents.

The inaugural Safety and Operations Summit identified a strong need for the establishment of priority actions:

Commitment on safety

- ❖ A strong commitment to safety is essential for creating a positive safety culture within the organisation. This commitment should be demonstrated at all levels of the organisation, from top-level management to individual employees.

- ❖ This involves actively participating in safety discussions, voicing concerns, and empowering colleagues to prioritise safety.

- ❖ Individuals can demonstrate their commitment to safety by using the appropriate personal protective equipment, following safety procedures, and maintaining a vigilant attitude towards hazards.

- ❖ Employers can further reinforce this commitment by establishing clear safety policies, providing regular training, and investing in safety-enhancing technology and resources.

Operationalisation of existing initiatives – runway excursion

- ❖ An assessment of the current situation is needed to effectively operationalise existing safety initiatives, like runway safety teams.

- ❖ Analyse the contributing factors to the increasing runway excursions and set measurable goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) to track progress on reducing runway excursions.

- ❖ Utilize robust methods for identifying new and existing risks, such as reviewing processes and procedures, redesigning workflows, and implementing educational measures.

❖ Develop a framework for selecting and disseminating new safe practices, ensuring effective implementation and sustainability of improvement programs.

Establishment of collaborative safety enhancement groups

❖ Establishing collaborative safety enhancement groups is a valuable strategy for safety improvement, as commercial competition must never prevent safety collaboration.

❖ These groups bring together diverse stakeholders to collectively identify, prioritise, and monitor safety risks.

❖ This collaborative approach allows for the sharing of safety information and the development of targeted safety enhancement initiatives that are tailored to specific needs.

❖ As a matter of urgency, AFRAA is required to establish a Safety Group as part of its Technical, Operations, and Training Committee that will meet quarterly to exchange safety data and address identified trends.

More specific training

❖ Training in safety matters, awareness creation, and workshops [a minimum of one per quarter on various safety topics] are essential.

❖ Cultivate a robust foundation in management and leadership, focussing on the influence of cultural education. This involves reconciling differences between words and actions, treating blame as a systemic reaction, and comprehending the misconceptions surrounding safety management systems.

❖ Provide fatigue management training for pilots, maintenance engineers, air traffic controllers, ground handling agents, and others.

❖ Provide training on recognising typical human reactions, such as the startle effect, to improve reaction recognition.