

ACSA and SAA weigh-in on opportunities in air cargo trade industry

The continent's largest air cargo trade fair opened in Johannesburg this week, attracting more than 80 exhibitors and 2 000 visitors.

Air Cargo Africa 2019 – the largest air cargo trade fair in Africa – kicked off this week at Emperors Palace in Johannesburg, attracting over 80 exhibitors and 2 000 visitors from across the continent.

The trade fair and expo will be staged until February 21, offering numerous networking opportunities and an international exhibition.

Speaking during the opening of the event, Charles Shilowa, group executive business development at Airports Company South Africa (ACSA), noted that the company considers itself a key role-player in the facilitation of intra- and inter-African trade, particularly in light of the power status of OR Tambo International Airport on the continent.

“Over the past 12 years, we have transformed ourselves to become a partner of choice for providing technical services, airport management services and training services in Africa, with countries like Ghana, Liberia and Zambia as beneficiaries to date,” he says.

Shilowa also highlighted ACSA's equity investments in strategic airport concessions, with airports in Brazil and India being the company's first two investments.

He noted that world trade is strongly linked to aviation, with airlines transporting more 50 million tons of goods a year, representing more than 35% of global trade.

“On average, cargo business generates over 90% of airlines' revenues – twice the revenue airlines would make from first class ticket sales. This is because as capacity for air transport increases so does the consumer demand for low-volume, high-value luxury goods,” Shilowa stated.

Freight traffic between Africa and regions such as the Middle East, Asia and the Indian subcontinent is expected to grow at 6% in the next decade and at about 5% over the next two decades.

Shilowa said ACSA is on the verge of upscaling and modernising our capability and offering, and the OR Tambo International Airport is to receive a state-of-the-art cargo terminal, with a capacity of two million tons per annum.

Also delivering a keynote address was South African Airways CEO Vuyani Jarana, who also highlighted the importance of aviation for trade and economic growth.

“The movement of people and goods from city to city remains one of the elements of proper global trade. In 2017, 4.4 billion passengers were transported from point to point by air. Goods valued at about \$6 billion were transported by air worldwide,” he said.

This translates to 12 million passengers and \$80.8 million worth of cargo per day.

“This underscores the importance of the aviation industry in general and cargo services, in particular. Africa’s share in passenger traffic is only 2%, projected to grow at 4.9% until 2036, and to create six million jobs and contributes about \$55 million to the continent’s GDP,” Jarana said, adding that the airfreight industry is a catalyst for job growth and economic benefits.

Messe München purchased the Air Cargo India and Air Cargo Africa exhibitions from the Indian publishing house Stat Trade Times last year, and aims to upgrade and expand the events as part of the exhibition firm’s global portfolio of industrial, transport and logistics, and supply chain events.

Gerhard Gerritzen, member of the management board of Messe München Germany, said that Stat Trade Times developed Air Cargo Africa with a keen understanding of the African market and the needs of customers on this continent, adding that the event will be further developed into a highly professional platform that connects companies from Africa and from all over the world.

“Air Cargo Africa has a lot of potential to facilitate constructive and imaginative partnerships among stakeholders,” Gerritzen stated.

The three-day Air Cargo Africa conference will feature several niche air shippers’ forums, while industry experts will unpack topical themes including ‘Liberalisation and Modernisation’, ‘Air cargo in a digital era’, ‘Trade barriers and populist agendas’, ‘China’s belt and road initiative and investments in Africa’, and the future of unmanned vehicles in the air cargo industry.

Entrance to attend the exhibition is free. For further information visit <https://www.stattimes.com/ACA2019/>
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