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New road for training

Committing to the provision and sustainability of aviation training excellence in Africa

Aviation is growing its footprint in Africa. It's one of the fastest growing aviation markets in the world. Predictions are that the next 10 years may see an annual growth of 7.5 percent. With that growth comes the need for thousands of aviation professionals to be trained in line with international standards. But forecasts and research predict a significant shortage of qualified personnel in all aspects of aviation in Africa.

Experts Working Group

To address this issue, the International Civil Aviation Organisation ICAO, has established a working group to explore

the key issue of lack of qualified personnel as a part of its AFI Plan. The Training Experts Working Group (TEWG) developed a plan to address three primary areas:

1. the current and forecast demand for training in Africa,
2. the capacity for training in Africa, and
3. the barriers for harmonization of training in Africa.

One of the first activities of the TEWG was to conduct a survey of African states to identify aviation training needs and capacity. The results revealed that the need for qualified personnel clearly exceeds Africa's capacity to produce personnel. Large gaps exist in the areas of airport operations and regulatory ac-

tivities. Technical experts are also in demand, including air traffic controllers, pilots, and maintenance technicians. In his opening remarks at the Second Pan African Aviation Training Coordination Conference in Cairo in 2010, the ICAO Secretary General stated that between 2010 and 2030, 3,500 pilots a year will be needed and Africa has the capacity to produce 1,000 pilots a year. The ICAO Global and Regional 20 Year Forecast predicts an annual fleet growth rate in Africa of 6.1%. According to the ICAO forecast, Africa will experience an annual shortage of 3,691 pilots, and 3,169 maintenance personnel. The study referred to "weak training capacities" for pilot training and identified Africa as having the lowest training capacities of all regions for maintenance

personnel. Overall, it was noted that there is a high and increasing demand for training in all areas of aviation in Africa and that existing training organizations do not have the capacity to address these needs.

Barriers

The TEWG also identified numerous barriers to address training. These include a lack of adequate facilities, inability to attract and retain qualified instructors and course developers, and lack of technical expertise for course delivery. Logistical issues also exist such as location of training centers, access to affordable and accessible accommodations, visa acquisition, and cost. Regulatory barriers include variable training requirements due in part to the vague language of some standards such as competencies require-



ments.

Call to Action – AATO

The information gathered by the TEWG was presented to stakeholders at the Second Pan-African Aviation Training Coordination Conference in Cairo in 2010 and further work continued at the Third Pan-African Aviation Training Coordination Conference in Cape Town in 2011. The participants agreed on a key set of actions. The cornerstone was the goal of establishing an aviation training organization to foster cooperation and sharing of resources and to provide a mechanism for influencing policy on matters related to aviation training in Africa. This

organization would also establish a system to accredit and designate Centers of Excellence. In April 2012, the Association of African Aviation Training Organizations (AATO) Conference was held in Kenya for the purpose of establishing the framework for the creation of the AATO. The Conference established an interim council to expedite the creation of the AATO.

The objectives of the AATO identified in the newly signed constitution are to:

1. Promote cooperation among members
2. Promote interests of its members and aviation training in Africa
3. Promote the harmonization and standardization of aviation training in Africa
4. Encourage the sharing of expertise among its members and other aviation organizations
5. Encourage and facilitate the adoption of new technology through research and development

Benefits of membership

Some of the key benefits of membership in the AATO include the sharing of best practices, course materials, and curriculum amongst training centers. Additionally, the AATO provides a voice for members by developing and advocating positions on issues impacting training organizations. Members will also have support in the areas of research and guidance towards becoming an accredited center of excellence.

Training initiatives in Africa have advanced significantly since the initial work of the TEWG. The approach has been based on the principles of integrity, transparency, fair representation, excellence, and innovation. The AATO is a major milestone for addressing the training needs in Africa. With the creation of the AATO, training organizations in Africa will further enhance their ability to close the gap between



capacity and demand for qualified personnel in aviation.

Launch

In April 2013, after several years of meetings and planning, the AATO was officially launched in Kenya at its first assembly. Representatives from training institutions and organizations throughout Africa came together to address the challenges and opportunities associated with training the next generation of aviation professionals. The theme of the assembly was “Committed to the provision and sustainability of aviation training excellence in Africa” which has been adopted as the motto of the organization.



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Funding the AATO

The implementation of the AATO Strategic Plan 2013-2015 is mainly based on funding from membership fees and subscriptions, donations and sponsorship. It is envisaged that during the initial years limited activities will be carried out due to financial constraints as the recruitment of members goes on. This is however, expected to pick up progressively as more members join the Association to benefit from the ac-

creditation services to be offered. The organisation's budget requirements are defined as some US\$500,000 in the first year to US\$ 760,000 in its 4th year of operation with expressions of interest for hosting being solicited at the moment.

