

JANUARY 2026



VOL.3 - ISSUE 3

Newsletter from The Commercial Aviation Association of Southern Africa NPC

From our CEO

Soaring Together Toward Africa's Aviation Leadership in 2026

Dear Members, Partners and Friends of CAASA,

As we enter 2026 with **energy, optimism**, and **renewed strategic focus**, it's clear that this year offers unprecedented opportunity for Southern African and continental aviation. The skies ahead are not only vast but also ripe with promise for growth, connectivity, and inclusive progress that will re-establish our region as a leader in African aviation. It is also the year of the African Aerospace and Defence exhibition, **AAD**, that brings the continent together.

Vision: Growth with Purpose

Aviation is not merely a transportation sector; it is a critical economic engine. Globally and on our continent, aviation fuels trade, tourism, job creation, and socio-economic development. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) underscores that African aviation's contribution to GDP and employment is significant and poised for strong growth in the years ahead, but only if stakeholders take strategic actions now.

For CAASA and its members, this means setting strategic short-term "go-fast" plans that proactively:

- **Expand** market access and connectivity within Africa and beyond
- **Reinforce** safety and operational excellence grounded in global standards
- **Drive** inclusive policies that widen participation across demographics and skill levels
- **Advocate** for regulatory environments that enable competitiveness and innovation.

IN THIS ISSUE

**AAD2026
UPDATE**

NEWS

**AFFILIATE NEWS -
AATOSA**



Lead Partner

Cont.

Unified Advocacy and Collaboration

2025 saw CAASA deepen strategic collaborations, reaffirming and upgrading Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with both **BARSA** and the African Business Aviation Association (**AfBAA**). These partnerships align us with key stakeholders in commercial, general, and business aviation, ensuring our collective voice is both heard and effective at the table.

This is not about talking in isolation; it is about shared data, joint advocacy, and unified strategy that lead to tangible outcomes for industry growth. We are jointly engaging regulators, policymakers, and industry players to shape regulatory frameworks that are pragmatic, competitive, and future-ready.

Regulatory Evolution & Practical Safety

Safety remains the cornerstone of confidence in aviation, and our regulator, the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA), continues to prioritise compliance with ICAO standards and skills development in its strategic planning process. The CAA must undertake this process using **management of change, gap analysis, and economic impact assessments**, focusing on the neglected enabling environment. Safety regulations must be balanced with innovation, efficiency, inclusive development and industry feedback. CAASA will continue to champion an innovative regulatory approach that protects safety without imposing prohibitive costs or unnecessary barriers to growth, especially for smaller operators and emerging technologies.

Continental Connectivity & Market Integration

Africa recently achieved a remarkable milestone by securing nearly one-quarter of the seats on the ICAO Council, reflecting global confidence in our technical agenda and potential. This collective voice helps advance priorities such as the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), which is essential to the free movement of people, goods, and services across the continent.

We must seize this momentum and work with our continental partners, from airlines to regulators, to translate political commitments into operational reality, simplifying market access and increasing connectivity for CAASA members and all African operators.



Local Expertise: Our Competitive Advantage

Aviation is global, but leadership is local, and the regulator must harness industry expertise tenfold more than it currently does. Our region's homegrown expertise, from pilots and engineers to operational leaders and innovators, is the foundation on which sustainable growth is built.

CAASA's affiliated bodies, such as the Association of Aviation Training Organisations of South Africa (AATOSA), exemplify how local training institutions are shaping the future workforce, expanding inclusivity, and elevating standards across skills and regulatory competencies.

In 2026, we must deepen investment in local talent pipelines, strengthen mentorship and education partnerships, and unlock opportunities that ensure our aviation professionals are competitive locally and internationally. We must **celebrate, support, and integrate** local expertise into strategic planning. Doing so not only fills skills gaps but also roots our industry's growth in regional ownership and sustainability.

Charting the Year Ahead

This year, CAASA will focus on:

- **Driving regulatory reform** with input and industry alignment, ensuring sensible regulation that supports growth
- **Strengthening continental partnerships** to expand connectivity and participate in shaping aviation policy with a FOCUS on AAD as we have the 2026 edition in September
- **Growing inclusion** across gender, age, and disability in all aviation roles
- **Championing innovation and technologies** that propel Southern Africa into the forefront of global aviation evolution

We are poised to **deliver a world-class AAD**, and together we will **build a safer, faster-growing, inclusive aviation sector** - one that reclaims Southern Africa's leadership in African skies.

Thank you for your continued engagement, trust and commitment to excellence.



Kev Storie - CAASA CEO

C A A S A

Commercial Aviation Association
of Southern Africa NPC



2026 Lead Partner

Your Aviation Partner

Our affiliate Partners



www.caasa.co.za

Melissa Sewgolam
mobile: +27 (0)82 847 3403
e-mail: melissa@caasa.co.za
Gate 9, Lanseria
International Airport



THE LARGEST GATHERING OF DECISION MAKERS
AND BUYERS ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT



[Click here](#) to
download the
2025 CAASA AGM -
AAD Report

16 - 20 SEPT
#AAD2026

**YOUR GATEWAY TO CUTTING-EDGE
TECHNOLOGIES IN GLOBAL DEFENCE AND AEROSPACE**

BOOK YOUR SPOT NOW!

WWW.AADEXPO.CO.ZA | AIR FORCE BASE WATERKLOOF, CITY OF TSHWANE



AFRICA'S GATEWAY TO THE GLOBAL DEFENCE AND AEROSPACE COLLABORATION

AAD 2026 Officially Launched DURING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

With a legacy spanning more than 25 years, Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) has stood at the heart of the continent's aviation and defence story, uniting the thrill of flight, the power of innovation, and the future of aerospace under one iconic banner. This significant milestone was officially celebrated on 15 January 2026 at Air Force Base Waterkloof with the launch of AAD 2026, officiated by South Africa's Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Angie Motshekga.

AAD formally debuted in 2000, with its roots tracing back to DEXSA—an exhibition that laid the foundation for what would become the continent's largest and most influential showcase of aviation and defence capabilities.

Today, AAD is recognised globally as a unique event that seamlessly merges a world-class defence exhibition with a full-scale public air show. It is this rare combination that sets AAD apart. From cutting-edge military aircraft and next generation technologies to breathtaking aerial displays, AAD delivers both industry substance and pure aviation spectacle.

In her address, Hon. Minister Angie Motshekga highlighted AAD's role in strengthening international defence cooperation, promoting local industry, and positioning Africa as a serious and competitive player in the global aerospace arena. Her remarks reinforced what many already know: AAD is not merely an exhibition, but a key national strategic platform for growth, collaboration, and global visibility.

The official launch was further marked by a prestigious awards ceremony recognising outstanding contributions to the success of AAD. Contribution to AAD Awards were presented to representatives from the South African National Defence Force, the Commercial Aviation Association of Southern Africa (CAASA), the Aero Club of South Africa, Air Show South Africa, and long-serving members of the AAD organisers' office.



The evening also celebrated emerging talent through the AAD Photography Competition. Meghan McCabe was awarded first place in the professional photography category, receiving a cash prize of R6 000, while Francois Louw was named runner-up and awarded R4 000. The youth category was won by Sebastian Horrell, who received R5 000.

Beyond the aircraft and displays, AAD's impact extends even further. The event continues to champion youth development, skills training, and innovation, inspiring the next generation of pilots, engineers, and aerospace professionals across Africa.

AAD represents a strong partnership between South Africa's Aerospace, Maritime and Defence Industry Association (AMD), the Armament Corporation of South Africa (ARMSCOR), and the Commercial Aviation Association of Southern Africa (CAASA). The event is further supported by South Africa's Department of Defence (DoD), the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (dti), and the City of Tshwane (CoT).

As AAD celebrates 25 years, one thing is clear: this is more than an anniversary. It is a celebration of Africa's gateway to global defence and aerospace collaboration.



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2025

To the class of 2025 - your hard work has paid off! Here's to new adventures, endless opportunities, and the exciting future ahead. You've got this!

Advertising AND BRANDING OPPORTUNITIES

For exhibitors who wish to enhance their visibility at Africa's premier aerospace and defence exhibition, AAD2026 offers ample opportunities to enhance brand awareness. Branding and sponsorship opportunities are also available on the website.

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK YOUR SPACE](#)



MEET THE AAD TEAM AT THE WORLD DEFENCE SHOW

Join the AAD team at the World Defence show in Saudi Arabia from 8-12 February 2026, as we gear up to #AAD2026, and you could gain exclusive exhibitor special deals. If you are attending WDS 2026, you can schedule an in-person meeting with AAD Exhibition

[CLICK HERE TO CONTACT AAD DIRECTOR](#)

FRIENDLY REMINDER TO ALL EXHIBITORS

As AAD 2026 is quickly approaching, please take note of the service providers available to meet all your various requirements and ensure smooth implementation.

SERVICE	NAME	TELEPHONE	EMAIL
General Services Expo Solutions	Craig McDonald	+27 (0) 83 326 5767	Craigm@exposolutions.co.za
FR Meyer's Sohn	Estelle Pienaar	Estelle: +27 (0) 72 583 3270	estelle.pienaar@fms-logistics.co.za
	Nico Troostheide	Nico: +27 (0) 83 628 6768	nico.troostheide@fms-logistics.co.za
Show Daily	Robert Mace	+27 (0) 82 458 3599	Robert@defenceweb.co.za
Official Catalogue Creative Space Media	Sizwe Zim	+27 (0) 11 467 3341 +27 (0) 82 762 2010	sizwe@creativespacemedia.co.za
Conferences and Seminars	Robert Mace	+27 (0) 82 458 3599	Robert@defenceweb.co.za
Catering Services	Malcolm Tait	+27 (0) 76 332 1313	malcolm@maineventcatering.co.za
Cleaning Services	Feroz Khan	+27 (0) 83 462 6637	ferozkhan@zfcleaning.co.za

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW TECHNICAL GUIDE](#)

Important dates TO KEEP IN MIND!

To make it easier for our exhibitors to plan their participation at AAD 2026, please see below for an easy breakdown of important dates.

16 - 18 SEPT 2026

TRADE DAYS & CONFERENCING

19 - 20 SEPT 2026

PUBLIC AIR SHOW DAYS

**STAY TUNED TO OUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS
FOR UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS!**





Industry News

MOTSHEKGA OFFICIALLY LAUNCHES AAD 2026 DURING SILVER ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

The Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) exhibition is one of the longest running such events on the continent, and is celebrating 25 years of existence. Defence Minister Angie Motshekga was the main functionary at an anniversary event and official launch of the 2026 edition at Air Force Base Waterkloof.

[READ MORE](#)


**CREAMER MEDIA'S
ENGINEERING NEWS**

Industry News

NATIONAL RECOGNITION STRENGTHENS AMBITIONS

The South African government has formally declared the Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) exhibition a national event. It is hosted by several governmental bodies, including the Department of Defence and Military Veterans, the Armaments Corporation of South Africa (Armcor), the South African Aerospace Maritime and Defence Industries Association (AMD) and the Commercial Aviation Association of Southern Africa (CAASA).

[READ MORE](#)


DefenceWeb
 Africa's leading defence news portal

Industry News

BRICS MARITIME EXERCISE SHOWCASES COOPERATION, DESPITE CONTROVERSY OVER IRAN

South African Navy Chief, Vice Admiral Monde Lobese, used his keynote address at the closing cocktail function of the BRICS Plus maritime Exercise Will for Peace 2026 aboard the frigate SAS Amatola on 15 January to underline the importance of multinational maritime cooperation, interoperability, and trust.

[READ MORE](#)

News



General Aviation: A Pillar of AAD's Enduring Success

General Aviation has long been a foundational pillar of the African Aerospace and Defence (AAD) exhibition, reflecting South Africa's depth of capability, institutional maturity and collaborative spirit across the aviation ecosystem. At a recent AAD 25-year celebration and launch, the contribution of General Aviation was formally acknowledged as one of the key categories that has helped shape the exhibition into Africa's premier aerospace and defence platform.

This recognition was both symbolic and substantive. It underscored the reality that AAD is not only a defence and security exhibition, but a holistic aviation showcase – one that recognises the interconnected roles of military aviation, commercial aerospace, and General Aviation in sustaining the broader industry.

A special moment of acknowledgement was reserved for Johannes Nell, whose two decades of dedicated service to AAD have left a lasting impact on the event's governance, financial stewardship, and success, including his appointment as Chairperson of the Finance Committee (FINCOM).

In addition, two cornerstone organisations within South Africa's General Aviation and airshow community– The Aero Club of South Africa and Airshow South Africa were formally recognised for their ongoing contributions. These associations represent the heartbeat of aviation in the country, and their engagement with AAD has ensured that General Aviation remains visible, relevant, and integrated within the broader aerospace and defence narrative.

AAD continues to provide a strategic platform for General Aviation stakeholders to engage meaningfully at both the national and international levels. For South Africa, the exhibition serves as a vehicle to strengthen relationships with partner nations, positioning the country as a reliable and capable collaborator across the aerospace, defence, and security domains. General Aviation plays a critical role in this ecosystem, contributing to innovation, skills pipelines, and industrial resilience.

Cont.

While often associated with large defence primes, AAD also supports small and medium enterprises, specialist GA manufacturers, maintenance organisations, and service providers that rely on export markets for growth and sustainability. By facilitating access to international delegations and buyers, AAD creates tangible commercial opportunities across the value chain.

The recognition of General Aviation, its associations and long-serving contributors such as Johannes Nel reflects AAD's appreciation of the sector's strategic value. As AAD continues to evolve, General Aviation will remain an integral partner in advancing South Africa's aerospace ambitions and showcasing African capability to the world.

Capturing Aviation in Motion

Photography has always played a decisive role in how aviation is experienced, remembered and shared with the world. At AAD, where precision engineering meets human ambition, and flight is both spectacle and science, the ability to capture these moments is central to telling AAD's story. This ethos was reflected in the AAD Photography Competition, generously supported by Mr Rob Garbett, a CASSA Board Director & Honorary Member, widely known for his enduring passion for aviation photography.

The competition invited AAD Airshow participants to submit their best photographs from the show, giving photographers an opportunity to showcase not only technical skill but also their ability to interpret the energy, emotion, and scale of the airshow environment.

Beyond the competition itself, Mr Garbett shared thoughtful reflections on the importance of photography as a medium. He referenced the pioneering work of French inventor Nicéphore Niépce, who produced the world's first permanent photograph in 1826. Nearly two centuries later, photography remains a critical tool for preserving history, shaping perception and inspiring future generations – particularly within aviation, where fleeting moments of flight demand both patience and precision to capture.



L to R – Rob Garbett & Meghan McCabe



L to R – Rob Garbett & Francious Louw



L to R – Rob Garbett & Sabastian Horrel

AAD Celebrates its 25th Anniversary



Exhibition Director - Nakedi Phasha



Mike Clark - AAD 2026 Policy Committee Chairperson



AAD YDP Chairman - Kholisile Khumalo

Long Service Award

Airshow South Africa Award



L to R - Mike Clark & Kevin Storie, received on behalf of Rikus Erasmus from ASSA



L to R - Mike Clark & Johannes Nell

Long Service Award



L to R - Kevin Storie & Michelle Nxumalo



AEROCUB of South Africa Award



Affiliate Update – AATOSA

Comprehensive Report: Participation in the Fifth AATO General Assembly and Visit to the Ethiopian Aviation University

Advancing African Aviation Training through Collaboration and Innovation



Introduction

The visit to Addis Ababa for the Fifth African Aeronautical Training Organization's (AATO) General Assembly, along with the subsequent tour of the Ethiopian Aviation University, represents a significant milestone in ongoing efforts to bolster aviation capacity across the continent.

It was a particular honour for AATOSA to be invited, reflecting the organisation's substantial contributions to regulatory development and its committed collaboration with the education sector to align aviation qualifications with academic standards—most notably, the recognition of the CPL and ATPL as degree equivalents."

This report aims to provide a detailed account of the proceedings, observations and strategic insights gained, with particular appreciation to the event organisers, sponsors and host institutions for their hospitality and unwavering commitment to aviation excellence. The AATO's mission—to harmonize, promote, and support aviation training in Africa—continues to serve as a guiding beacon for stakeholders, educators, and professionals invested in the sector's sustainable development.

Conference Participation and Proceedings

As an invited panellist at the General Assembly, our delegation played an active role in shaping the discourse around regional training standards, capacity building, and the integration of emerging technologies into curriculum development. The conference brought together representatives from civil aviation authorities, airline operators, academic institutions, and training centres, fostering robust dialogue on critical themes such as regulatory harmonization, digital transformation, and the evolving skills requirements in African aviation.

Notable sessions included panel discussions on skills-based training, workshops on safety management systems, and roundtables that addressed the impact of global industry trends on African markets. Stakeholder engagement was particularly fruitful, with delegates exchanging experiences on overcoming resource constraints, adapting to regulatory changes, and leveraging partnerships for mutual benefit. The collaborative atmosphere of the Assembly emphasized the importance of collective action to drive regional growth.

Tour of the Ethiopian Aviation University

The visit to the Ethiopian Aviation University provided valuable insights into the institution's state-of-the-art facilities and forward-thinking educational programs. The campus features an extensive simulator centre, equipped with 8 full-motion flight simulators for Boeing and Airbus aircraft, as well as advanced air traffic control and maintenance training suites. These resources allow students to learn industry-relevant skills in a realistic operational environment, bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical application.

Program offerings include undergraduate and graduate degrees in aviation management, aerospace engineering, maintenance, and cabin crew training. The university's commitment to inclusivity is reflected in its support of female students and regional scholarship initiatives, resulting in a diverse and highly skilled graduate cohort. Alumni have held positions with leading airlines, regulatory bodies, and international aviation organizations, testifying to the impact of the institution's rigorous approach to training.

African Aviation Training Landscape: Challenges and Opportunities

Despite notable progress, the African aviation training ecosystem still faces several challenges. These include inequalities in access to quality education, limited infrastructure in remote regions, and a shortage of qualified instructors. Regulatory fragmentation further complicates cross-border recognition of qualifications, hindering workforce mobility and efficient allocation of resources.

However, the continent also offers significant opportunities for innovation and growth. The increasing demand for skilled aviation professionals, driven by growing passenger markets and cargo operations, has spurred investment in new training centres and the adoption of blended learning models. Regional collaboration, supported by entities such as AATO, paves the way for harmonized standards, shared curricula, and joint certification schemes. South Africa, with its established aviation sector and academic expertise, is well-positioned to contribute to these efforts, serving as a hub for the dissemination of best practices and capacity building.

However, it is important to note that while South Africa currently holds a leading position in African aviation training, this status is not guaranteed indefinitely. Without continued and strategic investment in infrastructure, technology, and human resources, South Africa risks losing its number one spot to emerging competitors who are rapidly advancing their own capabilities.

Collaborative Success Factors and Case Studies

Effective collaboration between governments, airlines, and academic institutions has emerged as a key driver of training excellence. For example, the Ethiopian Aviation University's partnership with the national airline allows students to do internships and hands-on training, ensuring alignment between educational outcomes and industry needs. Joint research initiatives—such as those focusing on sustainable aviation fuels and digital air traffic management—demonstrate the potential of academia industry synergies to address contemporary challenges.

Case studies from other African countries highlight the value of cross-sectoral partnerships. In Kenya, the integration of e-learning platforms and remote simulator access has extended training reach to disadvantaged communities. Meanwhile, regulatory reforms across the continent have facilitated greater private sector investment in aviation education, leading to improved facilities and curriculum innovation. These examples highlight repeatable models for success across the region.

Impact and Regional Development

The influence of the Ethiopian Aviation University extends beyond national borders and contributes to the development of a skilled workforce that can support Africa's growing aviation industry. Its graduates play crucial roles in improving safety, operational efficiency, and customer service across airlines and airports, while ongoing research initiatives support the adoption of new technologies and best practices. The university's emphasis on regional collaboration has fostered knowledge exchange and professional mobility, strengthening the sector's resilience and adaptability.

The broader impact of such institutions is reflected in improved connectivity, economic growth and job creation across the continent. By raising the standard of aviation training, Africa is better equipped to meet international standards, attract investment, and respond to changing market needs.

Forward-thinking recommendations

To ensure sustainable growth in African aviation training, this report recommends the following strategies:

- Strengthen regional frameworks for qualification recognition and curriculum harmonization, allowing for greater workforce mobility.
- Increase investment in simulation technology and digital learning platforms, expanding access to high-quality training.
- Promote gender diversity and inclusion through targeted scholarships and mentorship programs.
- Encourage ongoing dialogue between regulators, industry, and academia to align training standards with market needs.
- Leverage South Africa's expertise to establish regional centres of excellence and facilitate cross-border knowledge transfer.

Stakeholders are encouraged to build on existing collaborative initiatives, share best practices, and prioritize capacity-building efforts that address both current and future challenges.

Conclusion

The fifth AATO General Assembly and the visit of the Ethiopian Aviation University reaffirmed the central role of collective action, innovation and strategic investment in the advancement of African aviation education. Our delegation remains deeply grateful for the opportunity to engage with sector leaders, share insights and witness first-hand the transformative impact of educational excellence. Looking to the future, continued commitment to collaboration and continuous improvement will be essential to realise the continent's aviation potential and ensure a safe, efficient and inclusive future for all.

We extend sincere gratitude to the hosts and organisers and pledge our continued support for initiatives that promote regional development, professional growth and excellence in aviation training across Africa.

Kind Regards

Shaun Ledlie

President AATOSA



Shaun Ledlie
AATOSA President

Phone: +27 (0) 85 526 4474
E-mail: saledlie@aato.co.za
Address: CAASA House,
Lanseria International Airport,
Gate 9, Gauteng, RSA.
Website: www.aato.co.za



AATOSA President, Shaun Ledlie,
at the fifth AATO General Assembly in Ethiopia





Come Fly with Us

At CAASA we remain invested in *your* success.

To that end, CAASA would like to support our valued member's endeavours by offering the opportunity to participate and contribute to our monthly newsletters in the months ahead.

All we need is:

1. Your company logo (JPG or PDF)
2. Your company overview, along with the products and/or services you offer (long short form)
3. Share any significant milestones (again, long or short form and any supporting visuals (JPG or PDF) – Optional
4. All your contact details, including your website and social media links.

Do this, and we'll rack and stack your contribution for inclusion. We'll also share the final copy and the laid-out page(s) with you for review and approval before publication.

Get involved and reap the benefits of getting your business in front of curated, aviation-focused peers pro bono!

Reach out to our General Manager, Melissa Sewgolam (melissa@caasa.co.za) and she'll make sure your voice is heard amongst our fellow members and beyond.

With 80-plus years of legacy and reputation, your contribution can only help us foster growth in your business and across our critically important aviation sector.