

# MRO

Aerospace Magazine

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# MRO and aftermarket set to rediscover pre-pandemic growth levels in Africa



Some MROs had to accelerate and reactivate many in-house capabilities.  
Photo: EGYPTAIR MAINTENANCE & ENGINEERING

Africa has seen a rebound in aircraft utilisation, MRO activity and aviation recovery is well underway. However, some post-pandemic challenges may still cause possible spikes in maintenance and other costs, as Keith Mwanalushi reports.

**A**frican airlines reported a drop in traffic of 60.2% during the worst of the Covid outbreak in 2020 and by July 2022, airlines saw an 84.8% rise in RPKs compared to 2021. IATA data shows that July capacity was up 46.7% and load factor rose 15.5% points to 75.0%. The African Airlines Association (AFRAA) suggests that in August 2022, traffic reached 77.2% of 2019 levels.

Speaking exclusively to *AviTrader MRO*, Engineer Yehia Zakaria Ismail - Chairman and CEO at EGYPTAIR MAINTENANCE &

ENGINEERING says the pandemic and long lockdown resulted in stagnation in the MRO services supply chain with the sudden demand that came after travel constraint removals. "Provisioning of spares, material and repair services faced huge challenges that ended up with prolonged TATs and affected the availability of aircraft and engines for operation," he tells.

The situation was worsened by the effects of global supply chain issues further deepened by the war in Europe



Eng. Yehia Zakaria Ismail - Chairman and CEO  
EGYPTAIR MAINTENANCE & ENGINEERING Co.

and energy inflation all over the world at a time when MROs were already struggling to overcome losses and financial distresses.

“One other post-Covid challenge has been the reduction in available cargo uplift capacity in the region, which represents a challenge in terms of logistics costs and engine shipping times.”

*Jason Gallant, StandardAero*



Some key delegates from the Aviation Africa Summit in Kigali, Rwanda. Photo: Qatar Airways

African MROs are facing the same aviation supply chain quandaries as other global regions and will need to adapt to smart solutions in times of disruptions. Mr Ismail says EGYPTAIR MAINTENANCE had to expand the supplier network and work closely with operators, authorities and logistic agents to secure and facilitate the provisioning of spares and repair services – “we were forced to redefine the priorities, because of the critical operation requirements. We also had to accelerate and reactivate many in-house capabilities while using all possible measures to maximise the use of on-hand assets, along with deploying our maintenance crew to compensate for the lack of line services. We also utilised our customer network given that we did not lay-off any of our technical personnel during the outbreak.”

EGYPTAIR MAINTENANCE & ENGINEERING has a very ambitious plan for expanding its line maintenance stations at several African airports. Although the pandemic had put brakes on such initiatives, the MRO provider has already re-launched this plan beginning

with setting up a line maintenance station in Accra, Ghana, supporting not only EGYPTAIR but also third-party operators.

Elsewhere, StandardAero supports operators across Africa from its facility at Lanseria International Airport (HLA), in Johannesburg, South Africa. The centre is a P&WC-authorized designated



Jason Gallant, General Manager, StandardAero at Lanseria International Airport

overhaul facility for the Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6A, and which also provides maintenance, repair and Mobile Repair Team (MRT) support for the PW100, as well as from another facility in Nairobi, Kenya which provides service centre support for the PT6A and PW100.

Jason Gallant, General Manager at StandardAero’s Lanseria facility says: “The rebound in aircraft utilisation and MRO demand resulted in new parts material supply chain challenges, which has in turn put pressure on TATs and maintenance costs.” Where possible, Gallant says StandardAero works to minimise these challenges by pursuing a “repair rather than replace” philosophy, drawing on the extensive component repair and overhaul capabilities, and – where appropriate – by utilising the in-house engine trading teams to source used serviceable material.

“One other post-Covid challenge has been the reduction in available cargo uplift capacity in the region, which represents a challenge in terms of logistics costs and engine shipping times,” mentions Gallant. “Whenever



The International Airlines Technical Pool (IATP) booth in Kigali.  
Photo: IATP



Rwandair hosted the Aviation Africa Summit in Kigali.  
Photo: Airbus

possible we attempt to use our relationships with the major shippers to minimise delays, but the reality is that we find ourselves competing with a huge number of multinational corporations for uplift," he adds.

In terms of opportunities, Gallant reveals that PT6A operators across the region are experiencing a surge in aircraft utilisation, with many business opportunities presenting themselves as the market rebounds from the pandemic, and this has in turn driven a surge in MRO demand. "The Cessna Caravan remains especially well-suited to meet the needs of many local operators, and StandardAero is uniquely able to provide local support for Caravan's various PT6A powerplant options. Our ability to provide MRT support to operators across the continent is also a critical factor in keeping the local fleet flying."

### **Rwanda provides the platform for industry debate**

In September, Rwanda hosted the Aviation Africa Summit and Exhibition in Kigali bringing together 52 airlines and delegates from 84 countries, including government director generals, aviation authorities and MROs.

Collins Aerospace was exhibiting in Kigali and is a major player in African aviation providing complete aviation solutions to aircraft manufacturers, integrators, airlines, airports and governments. "Our strategy is to offer our customers solutions to connect African countries to each other and to the rest of the world to promote economic development," states Didier Perrin, Sales and marketing Director, Avionics – Europe, Middle East and Africa at Collins Aerospace.

"On the industrial side, we see the growing potential of Africa that has encouraged Collins to increase its footprint." This includes cabin and flight deck avionics services in various locations including Morocco and South Africa.

Mr Perrin says the focus is on providing solutions that make operations safer, more efficient and

more connected. "Collins is continually increasing its presence across the region through ongoing investments and we recently expanded our site in Casablanca to support production of future programmes with major customers in the coming years," he says.

Collins supports some 130 jobs in Morocco and there are plans to double the headcount in the country within the next five years.



Didier Perrin, Sales and Marketing Director, Avionics – Europe, Middle East and Africa at Collins Aerospace.

The Magnetic Group attended the Aviation Africa event in Rwanda for the first-time bringing experience across all sectors of the company including line maintenance, CAMO, engines, asset sales and parts trading.

Among others, Magnetic was showcasing a modular plug-in shop for wheels, brakes, batteries maintenance. "It's a totally independent solution, suitable for any place, that doesn't require any special building or equipment in place," says Victoria Goodenough, Head of Business Development at Direct Maintenance – a division of Magnetic – which delivers modules to operators, provides set-up and assists with training personnel so that the shop can run locally without any external interference.

**“We see opportunities to grow this network further as African airlines grow and look for support and as more European leisure carriers fly into the region. We already support a number of customers in the region with CAMO, aircraft, engine and spare parts sales.**

*Victoria Goodenough, Direct Maintenance*

The Magnetic group has been present in Africa for several years with African Direct Maintenance stations in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia. "We see opportunities to grow this network further as African airlines grow and look for support and as more European leisure carriers fly into the region. We already support a number of customers in the region with CAMO, aircraft, engine and spare parts sales," Goodenough states.



Victoria Goodenough, Head of Business Development at Direct Maintenance.

Airbus was also present in Kigali showcasing its products and services and meeting with aerospace industry partners and stakeholders exchanging thoughts on challenges and opportunities for the continent. During the conference, experts at Airbus were talking about two impactful topics for

the region: sustainability and MRO.

Currently, several African carriers such as Ethiopian Airlines, Air Senegal, South African Airways, Air Côte d'Ivoire, EgyptAir, Uganda Airlines and Air Tanzania, have chosen to operate some of the most technologically advanced aircraft such as the A350, A330neo, A320neo and the A220.

Airbus forecasts that air traffic in Africa will achieve full recovery to 2019 levels between late 2023 and beginning 2025. According to the 2021 Airbus Global Market Forecast (GMF), African airlines will require 1,100 new passenger and freight aircraft deliveries by 2040. Airbus forecasts the need for 16,000 new technicians required to operate, support and maintain the continent's future jetliner fleet by 2040, which represents a 3% growth compared to pre-Covid numbers.



Joep Ellers, Airline Marketing Director - Africa at Airbus



African MROs are facing the same aviation supply chain quandaries as other global regions.  
 Photo: EGYPTAIR MAINTENANCE & ENGINEERING

Joep Ellers, Airline Marketing Director – Africa at Airbus believes this strong recovery is due to the fundamental drivers of traffic demand remaining unchanged: economic growth faster than the world average; young and growing population, urbanisation and middle-class development. “There continues to be strong air travel potential within Africa due to limited ground transportation infrastructures, an abundance of natural resources facilitating trade and numerous touristic opportunities,” he says.

Regarding the global supply chains issues, Mr Ellers responds saying due to the reduction in production in 2020 this has affected the whole sector, including the supply chains. He said: “After 18 months, demand is going up and we have increased production again. We are working with all our suppliers and have a watchtower in place which is actively managing the situation and putting anticipation and mitigation measures in

place. For 2022 we are targeting around 700 deliveries.”

Meanwhile, Boeing predicts demand for 1,010 new aircraft by 2040. In Kigali, Randy Heisey, Boeing Managing Director of Commercial Marketing for Middle East and Africa said: “We forecast an increase in the average aircraft size and seats per aircraft for the African fleet, as mid-size, single aisles, like the Boeing 737 MAX, will be the most in demand for the continent.”

Boeing anticipates that more than 80% of African jet deliveries are expected to serve fleet growth with more sustainable, fuel-efficient models such as the 737, 777X and 787, with nearly one in five deliveries replacing older aircraft.

Boeing sees an estimated demand for 21,000 technicians and commercial services opportunities such as supply chain, manufacturing, repair and overhaul are valued at \$80 billion.

The International Airlines Technical Pool (IATP) had the opportunity during

the event in Kigali to participate in the panel discussion on “Bringing essential support to the African continent”. The discussion highlighted the major role of the IATP as a convention of airlines sharing technical resources to generate economic savings and support on-time dispatch reliability and operational safety, and how this pooling principle could help supporting the development plans in the African aviation sector in the near future.

“It has been a great opportunity for the IATP to get closer to African airlines and MROs in order not only to explain our role and services, but also to attract more partners from the African continent and ensure they receive the essential support our organisation provides,” said Giorgio Pietra, President of the IATP Board of Directors. He added that many African airlines already expressed their interest in joining the IATP, in a clear sign of the positive participation in the event.