

Report by Executive Vice President Africa and Middle East**SUMMARY**

The Work of the IFATCA AFM Executive Vice President Africa and Middle East since the last Annual Conference in Singapore 2024.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Since the Singapore Conference, our region has made notable progress—facing challenges head-on while also celebrating many milestones. This report captures the highlights of these developments and initiatives.

1.2 I begin by extending my heartfelt gratitude to my colleagues on the Executive Board (EB), the AFM Executive Council (EC), and all our Member Associations (MAs). Your unwavering support has been my source of strength. With your encouragement, I hit the ground running and haven't looked back. Our unity and commitment are evident in every milestone we've reached.

1.3 A special word of appreciation goes to Trish, whose support during my onboarding was nothing short of incredible. Helena and Jean-Francois, your leadership and mentoring have been guiding lights. Tatiana, thank you for your endless patience, your support never wavered even when I asked the most basic questions. To all my fellow EB colleagues: thank you for making me feel at home. You have done well, as we say in Africa.

1.4 To the members of the AFM Executive Council your team spirit, dedication, and tireless energy inspire me. Your collaboration has been the bedrock of our success.

1.5 To all the directors, colleagues, and friends across the AFM region: thank you for entrusting me with this responsibility. Your participation, insights, and sacrifices often made in difficult circumstances are deeply appreciated.

1.6 I also want to recognize and applaud the work of our standing committees and taskforces. Your selfless contributions and commitment reflect the very soul of our Federation.

2. DISCUSSIONS

2.1 Meetings Attended

2.1.1 Attended and presented a solidarity message to the 14th IFATSEA Africa Regional Meeting which took place from June 25th – 28th, 2024, Casablanca, Morocco. Used this opportunity to engage with the leadership of the Moroccan ATC Association to rejoin the Federation.

2.1.2 Represented IFATCA at the high-level ICAO Africa and Indian Ocean AFI Aviation Week held from 15th-19th July 2024, Libreville, Gabo. Met and presented the plight of our detained colleagues to the DGCA DRC and Management of the ANSP. Our discussions failed to yield the desired result.

2.2.3 ICAO MID Office Collaborative Contingency Team (CCT) Meetings: I attended several meetings in response to the ongoing Middle East crisis, focusing on aviation safety, contingency planning, and airspace security.

2.2.4 Invited to attend the IFALPA AFI/MID Regional Meeting and Runway Safety Team Course, 30 September to 03 October 2024, Tunis, Tunisia. The EVP AFM was represented by RVP North Africa and Middle East, Nabil Touazi (Algeria), who delivered a well-received presentation on behalf of our region.

2.2.5 Attended APIRG/27 and RASG-AFI/10 4 -8 November 2024. Highlights of the meeting include two interesting WPs presented by South Africa on AI and ATM and Remote Tower Operations. IFATCA's policies on AI and Remote Tower operations were reiterated and graciously supported by many ATCOs at the meeting. The APIRG and MIDPIRG are important platforms in the region that require IFATCA's active presence and participation. Going forward relevant WPs shall be presented to draw attention to IFATCA's contribution to the improvement of aviation safety and air navigation efficiency as well as the challenges faced by members in the region. The attention of the meeting was drawn to the arbitrary arrest and detention of aviation professionals in the region while re-emphasizing management commitment to positive safety and just culture.

2.2.6 Attended the two EB meetings in Panama City, Panama (September 2024) and Johannesburg, South Africa (February, 2025). As a newly elected EVP AFM, attending the two recent IFATCA Executive Board meetings has been both inspiring and affirming. The depth of commitment, professionalism, and shared vision among the Board members truly impressed me. These meetings not only offered valuable insight into the inner workings of our Federation but also made me feel genuinely welcomed and supported in my new role. I'm grateful for the collaborative spirit and look forward to contributing meaningfully to our common goals.

2.2.7 Annual AFM Executive Council Meeting (ECM): First ECM: Abuja, Nigeria (2nd – 4th April 2025). The AFM Executive Council, in recognition of the critical role strong leadership and collaboration play in advancing the region's objectives, instituted the tradition of holding one in-person Executive Council Meeting annually. This decision was not made lightly but rather stems from a clear understanding that the unique benefits of face-to-face interaction far outweigh what can be achieved through virtual platforms.

2.2.7.1 While virtual meetings (held twice a month) have offered us a necessary and convenient means of communication, they cannot replicate the depth, clarity, and impact of in-person engagement. Physical meetings foster more open, focused, and productive discussions. They allow for nuanced dialogue, the building of trust and rapport, and more effective and timely decision-making.

2.2.7.2 The hosting of the annual meeting, however, depends on the ability of our Member Associations (MAs) to provide essential support including the venue, accommodation, meals, and local transportation. We are deeply grateful to NATCA Nigeria for their warm and generous hospitality in hosting this year's 3-day meeting—their support was truly unparalleled.

2.2.7.3 During the meeting, the AFM Executive Council took several significant decisions. These included the rollout of the AFM 2025–2027 Regional Plan, approval of the AFM PTC Work Plan, and a strategic session with Directors to deliberate on the implementation of the Regional Plan. Other critical issues were also addressed, including discussions on the AFM Regional Support Fund.

2.2.7.4 It is our hope that with the support of our Mas, this annual gathering will continue to be a cornerstone for reinforcing our unity, driving regional priorities, and sustaining momentum in our collective efforts to advance the objectives of IFATCA across the region.

2.3 AFM Virtual Presentation Series – Sharing Knowledge, Strengthening Our Profession: One of the most rewarding initiatives we have launched is the AFM Virtual Presentation Series, designed to empower air traffic controllers across the region. The AFM Virtual Presentation Series is to promote the desired awareness and to rekindle the enthusiasm of ATCOs in the AFM region to actively participate and support IFATCA activities both at the global and regional levels. The plan is to have about 13 presentations by EB members and Chairpersons of Task Force. So far, we've successfully delivered seven (7) inspiring presentations since we launched the initiative July 2024. The presentations were excellent and educative whilst the attendance and participation was equally impressive.

2.3.1 1st Virtual Presentation: *IFATCA and ICAO Air Navigation Commission-the way forward* (3 July 2024). Speakers: PCX Helena Sjostrom Falk and DP Jean-Francois Lepage.

2.3.2 2nd Virtual Presentation: *Perspective from the IFATCA Regions* (18 July 2024). Speakers: EVP AMA Patricia Gilbert and EVP EUR Fredric Deleau.

2.3.3 3rd Virtual Presentation: *Understanding IFATCA's Finances* (1 August 2024). Speaker: EVP Finance Thomas McRobert.

2.3.4 4th Virtual Presentation: *Understanding IFATCA's Communication Strategy and Equity Diversity and Inclusion* (26 August 2024). Speakers: Communication Coordinator Nicola Niriada and Chair EDITF Sverre Ivar Elsbak.

2.3.5 5th Virtual Presentation: *Understanding IFATCA's Vision 2030+ and Initiatives for the Promotion and Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing* (26 September 2024).

2024). Speakers: Chair Vision 2030+ Task Force Julian Ogilvie and Chair, Mental Wellbeing Task Force Jaco Van Der Westhuizen.

2.3.6 6th Virtual Presentation: *IFATCA's Technical & Operational Contributions to Safety & Efficiency* (8 Oct 2024) Speaker: EVP Tech, Benjamin Vander Sanden.

2.3.7 7th Virtual Presentation: *Asia-Pacific Region & Speak English Programme* (23 Dec 2024) Speaker: EVP ASP, Cheryl Chen.

These sessions provide valuable learning experiences and help us build a stronger, more connected community of ATCOs across the region. We shall continue and hopefully conclude the presentation series this year.

2.4. Woman to Woman Talk Initiative – Elevating Female Leadership in Aviation: We launched this initiative to amplify the voices of women in aviation, and the response has been overwhelming.

2.4.1 The first session was held on 24th January 2025. Speaker: Ms. Paule Assoumou Koki (Director General, Cameroon CAA). The first session was so well attended that our Zoom limit of 100 participants was exceeded!

2.4.2 The second session was held on 28th January 2025 – Second Session. Speaker: Ms. Khoza Poppy (Director of Civil Aviation, South African CAA). Another powerful and engaging discussion from a phenomenal personality.

2.4.3 This initiative is clearly filling an important gap, and we are excited to continue featuring strong, inspirational women in aviation. We shall continue with the Talk Series.

2.5. Crisis in the DRC – The Plight of Our Detained Colleagues: One of the most distressing challenges we are facing is the detention of two ATCOs in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Despite sending official letters and making frantic efforts, there has been no response from DRC authorities.

2.5.1 The situation in Goma has worsened, with M23 Armed group taking control, forcing many ATCOs into precarious situations. Some have fled for safety, and those remaining face unimaginable challenges.

2.5.2 Unfortunately, in February, the Tower Supervisor at Kinshasa was arrested and detained by the DRC Military Authorities over allegations of leaking sensitive information concerning the arrival time and registration details of the aircraft transporting the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo from Kinshasa to Luanda, Angola. While no formal charges were filed, the ATC supervisor remained in custody for two weeks before being released. The psychological impact of the ordeal was significant, and he was unable to resume duty immediately due to the trauma he endured.

2.5.3 We are continuing to monitor the situation closely, but at this stage, direct engagement with DRC authorities could further endanger our colleagues.

2.6 ATCOs Detention in Sierra Leone: Two ATCOs were arrested and detained due to an unauthorised landing of an aircraft in Freetown.

2.6.1 The unknown aircraft landed at the airport at night after closing hours without any communication with the tower.

2.6.2 Luckily due to IFATCA's intervention through the RVP West Africa, Francis Armah-Mensah (Ghana), our colleagues were subsequently released after spending ten days (10) in detention.

2.7 Crisis in Sudan – Displacement of ATCOs and Contingency Operations

2.7.1 The ongoing armed conflict in Sudan has had a devastating impact on the country's civil aviation infrastructure and operations. The escalation of hostilities has led to the displacement of hundreds of aviation professionals, including Air Traffic Controllers (ATCOs), many of whom have been forced to flee their duty stations due to the extreme insecurity, destruction of infrastructure, and deteriorating humanitarian conditions.

2.7.2 The situation has been particularly dire in Khartoum, where the national Area Control Centre (ACC) was previously situated. The sustained fighting in and around the capital rendered the continuation of services impossible, leading to a complete halt in en-route air traffic services for an extended period. Several ATCOs narrowly escaped harm, and many have since been displaced internally or relocated to neighboring countries. Their safety, welfare, and wellbeing remain a serious concern.

2.7.3 In response to this crisis, and with support from regional and international stakeholders, the Sudanese Civil Aviation Authority initiated contingency plans aimed at partially restoring the provision of air navigation services. A temporary Area Control Centre was activated in Port Sudan, located in the relatively safer eastern region of the country.

2.7.4 The new contingency ACC in Port Sudan has been tasked with re-establishing limited area control services within the available technical and human resource capacity. Despite the constraints, a skeleton team of committed ATCOs—some of whom were relocated from other regions—have been able to maintain a level of continuity, providing en-route and overflight services within the controlled airspace under extremely challenging conditions.

2.7.5 IFATCA has maintained close contact with aviation professionals in Sudan and continues to monitor the situation. We commend the courage and resilience of our Sudanese colleagues, who, despite personal and professional hardship, have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to maintaining air traffic safety.

2.7.6 The plight of Sudanese ATCOs further highlights the urgent need for global solidarity and contingency planning to ensure continuity of services during armed conflicts and humanitarian emergencies.

2.7.7 We stand in solidarity with our colleagues in Sudan and reaffirm our commitment to supporting their reintegration and professional continuity when conditions permit.

2.8 Sanaa Tower: The Sanaa airport control tower was destroyed by airstrikes on 26th December 2024 injuring two air traffic controllers.

2.8.1 IFATCA promptly issued a press release in solidarity with the Yemeni air traffic controllers and underscored the urgent need to protect civilian aviation personnel.

The Federation also calls on global entities and conflict parties to uphold international laws that safeguard air traffic controllers and critical infrastructure.

2.9 Membership Drive – Growing and Reconnecting: We are actively working to bring back former members and welcome new ones. We sent letters of invitation to Morocco, Lebanon, Libya, Chad, Rwanda, South Sudan and informally engaged Oman to attend the 35th AFM regional meeting in Cairo.

2.9.1 Chad and Libya attended and participated as observers.

2.9.2 New interest from: Oman, Rwanda, South Sudan and renewed engagement Conference in Abu Dhabi. This is a huge step in strengthening our regional presence and collaboration. We are optimistic that more ATC associations from the Middle East will join us at the Annual Conference.

2.10 AFM Executive Council: The Council comprise of seven members including the EVP AFM, four (4) elected Regional Vice Presidents: Nabil Touazi (Algeria) North Africa and Middle East, Tonny Kepler Ssenkubuge (Uganda) East Africa, Francis Armah-Mensah (Ghana) West Africa and Allan Manema (Zimbabwe) Southern Africa and two (2) non elected members: Nadia Nyamokuka Bamowongo (DR Congo) Chair AFM Professional and Technical Committee and Maureen Kathoka Isika (Kenya) Chair AFM Communications Committee.

2.10.1 The nomenclature of the hitherto AFM Executive Board was changed to Executive Council to avoid confusion with the IFATCA Executive Board.

2.10.2 Consequent upon the election of the RVP West Africa as EVP AFM. Francis Armah-Mensah from GHATCA, Ghana was appointed as RVP West Africa. He was subsequently elected at the regional meeting held in Cairo, Egypt in October 2024.

2.10.3 To align with the IFATCA EB structure, the AFM Communication Committee Chair, Maureen Isika (KATCA), was appointed as a member of the AFM EC.

2.11 The 35th AFM Regional Meeting: The meeting which was hosted by the Egyptian Air Traffic Controllers' Association (EGATCA) and held from 21st – 23rd October 2024 was a landmark event and a huge success. This was one of the most attended meetings in recent years, showing the region's growing engagement. It proved to be a memorable and impactful gathering. Hosted with exceptional hospitality and professionalism by our Egyptian colleagues, the meeting brought together two Aviation Ministers (Egypt & Nigeria), ICAO Middle East Region, twenty-nine (29) MAs, three (3) ATC Associations and several sponsors and Industry Partners and key stakeholders from across the region.

2.11.1 The meeting was marked by a strong spirit of unity, engagement, and renewed commitment to the goals of IFATCA. The sessions featured insightful presentations, open and constructive discussions, and valuable exchanges on the operational, technical, and professional challenges faced across the region.

2.11.2 Centred around the theme: - **Invest in People: Building Safety Capabilities for the Future**. Two Panel discussions on *Human-Centred Aviation Automation: The Imperative of AI in ATM Systems* and *Empowering Women in Aviation: Perspectives from Africa and Middle East Region* were held while seven WPs on capacity building, regional collaboration, and advancing safety standards in air traffic management

were presented. Delegates also addressed critical issues such as staffing, training, and the integration of new technologies in the ATM environment.

2.11.3 The host country, Egypt, went above and beyond in providing a warm and vibrant atmosphere, showcasing not only their commitment to IFATCA but also the rich cultural heritage of Cairo. The networking opportunities and camaraderie among participants added a special touch to the proceedings, reinforcing the bonds within our regional family.

2.11.4 We were encouraged by the level of engagement and the shared determination to strengthen our regional voice. The outcomes of this meeting will serve as a solid foundation for our continued work and advocacy on behalf of air traffic controllers across Africa and the Middle East.

2.11.5 The EB was represented by David Perks who served as a panelist on one of the panel discussions on the opening day. He also made invaluable contributions and interventions while the event lasted.

2.11.6 A communique and a comprehensive report were released post-event.

2.12. AFM Regional Support Fund (RSF) – A financial safety Net and a major step in ensuring financial sustainability for the region. The Fund was approved at the 35th RM to support financially struggling MAs and for human capacity development with the following Contribution Structure:

- Category 1: \$200
- Category 2: \$150
- Category 3: \$100

2.12.1 GHATCA Ghana has accepted to manage the bank account for the Fund.

2.12.2 Fund Manager has been appointed by the AFM Executive Council.

2.13. Looking ahead, key initiatives are planned for implementation:

- AFM Safety Webinar Series: A new initiative focused on professional development and training.
- IFATCA AFM ICONS Initiative: A project to honour past AFM EVPs and celebrate the region's history.

2.14 Host for the 36th AFM RM: Zimbabwe (Victoria Falls, 3 -5 November 2025).

2.15 Potential hosts for the 37th AFM RM (2026): Jordan and Angola.

2.16 Election of Executive Council Members at the 35th AFM Regional Meeting. Election into the AFM Executive Council were successfully held under the supervision of David Perks, IFATCA Liaison Officer to ICAO and EB member who represented the Board at the Regional Meeting.

2.16.1 Following the elections, the region welcomes the newly elected Executive Council members who will serve in their respective capacities for the upcoming terms:

- Ahmad Abba (NATCA, Nigeria) – Elected as Executive Vice President (EVP) for the Africa and Middle East Region. He will serve from the conclusion of the 2025 Annual Conference until the end of the 2027 Annual Conference.

- Nabil Touazi (SNPCA, Algeria) – Elected as Regional Vice President (RVP) for North Africa and the Middle East, to serve from the 2024 Regional Meeting through to the 2026 Regional Meeting.
- Tonny Kepler Ssenkubuge (UGATCA, Uganda) – Elected as Regional Vice President (RVP) for East Africa, serving from 2024 to 2026.
- Francis Armah-Mensah (GHATCA, Ghana) – Re-elected as Regional Vice President (RVP) for West Africa, to serve for another term from 2024 to 2026.
- Allan Manema (ATCAZ, Zimbabwe) – Elected as Regional Vice President (RVP) for Southern Africa, for the 2024–2026 term.

2.16.2 The AFM region extends its sincere appreciation to all members who have accepted the call to serve and contribute to the growth, unity, and advancement of the region and the profession at large. Their leadership is critical as we continue to address regional challenges, foster collaboration, and represent the interests of air traffic controllers across Africa and the Middle East.

2.16.3 We also acknowledge the outgoing Executive Council members for their unwavering dedication and service to the region during their tenure.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 Reflecting on these past few months fills me with immense pride. The passion and engagement across our region are at unprecedented levels. We've launched important initiatives that are making a difference.

3.2 Some challenges, especially those in the DRC and Sudan, weigh heavily on our hearts. But in these trying times, we are reminded of our duty, to advocate, to support, and to stand with our colleagues.

3.3 There is more work to be done, but with our shared purpose and determination, the future looks promising. I am confident that the strength of our region lies in its people and our people are extraordinary.

3.4 I extend our sincere appreciation to the UAE for hosting the 64th Annual Conference and to South Africa for hosting the recent EB meeting. Your hospitality and professionalism continue to set a high bar.

3.5 Special recognition and thanks to all our friends and colleagues who are representing the AFM region on IFATCA Committees and Task Forces as Chairs or members:

3.6. Lastly, to our Women Support Group, your service, often unheralded, is essential. We see you, we appreciate you, and we are proud of you.

3.7 Finally, our heartfelt appreciation to Fateh Bekhti, our immediate past EVP AFM, for his invaluable mentorship and guidance over the past year. Fateh has been a steady source of support, wisdom, and encouragement. We are truly grateful for the path he helped shape for us all.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 That this report is accepted as information.