

Times Aerospace & Aviation AFRICA 2026

By Alan Peaford, MBE, Times Aerospace Events Chairman

Aviation Africa 2026 Nairobi: "Time to Break the Mould"

Aviation Africa opened today in Nairobi [#Kenya](#) with a call for the continent's aviation sector to be transformed from a fragmented industry into a genuine engine of economic integration, as leaders from across Africa's air transport sector gathered for two days of discussion co-located with the Africa Drone Forum.

In his opening address, Alan Peaford, MBE, chairman of Times Aerospace Events, said Africa "cannot, and will not, realise the full promise of its economic integration, without a stronger aviation sector." Despite being home to 1.4 billion people, 55 countries and some of the world's fastest-growing economies, he noted that travelling between African countries remains difficult, expensive and time-consuming — a constraint not just on passengers, but on trade, tourism and investment.

Peaford highlighted Kenya as an example of progress, pointing to World Bank findings that the country's connectivity index rose 34% within Africa and 30% internationally, with 81 scheduled airlines now operating in the market. He also referenced ongoing regional cooperation, including efforts toward an East African Upper Flight Information Region, as evidence that cross-border coordination can move from ambition to operational reality.

Significant challenges remain, Peaford acknowledged, including high fuel and operating costs, currency pressures, taxation, limited access to finance, and infrastructure that has struggled to keep pace with demand. Fragmented regulation and restricted market access continue to limit intra-African connectivity. At the same time, he pointed to substantial opportunity: the development of globally competitive aviation hubs, growth in air cargo and logistics, expansion of sustainable aviation fuel production, and the use of digital technology to improve passenger experience and operational efficiency.

The event, hosted in cooperation with the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority ([#KCAA](#)) and partners including Kenya Airways [#Kenya](#) Airways, AFCAC, AFRAA, AfBAA, IATA and ICAO, brings together airline chiefs, MROs, airports, aviation lawyers, business aviation operators, manufacturers and supply chain representatives. The African Civil Aviation Commission is also meeting with Directors General from across the continent ahead of the upcoming ICAO congress.

"The opportunity is before us," Peaford said. "The challenge is to break the mould and turn connectivity from an aspiration into a reality."



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