



An interview with the company CEO, Tamer El-Kallawi, looking into the company's performance, responsibilities and its role as a company immediately responsible to run airport affairs in the country.

Please brief us on the categories of the airports in the country.

Basically, we have two categories of airports: **international and domestic**. International airports are those receiving both international and domestic air traffic. These airports have direct flights to/from airports outside Namibia and to/from other airports in Namibia. In this category, we have Hosea Kutako and Walvis Bay international airports.

At Walvis Bay, we have direct flights to/from the two South Africa cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg. We also have direct flights between Windhoek and Walvis Bay. There, we have pretty much a modern and efficient infrastructure to cater for the passenger demands of today and many years to come. We now need to maximize its utilization through additional domestic and international routes. Ultimately, we will need to look at opportunities of expanding the capabilities for air cargo operations. That's for the next step.

Hosea Kutako is our national flagship linking Namibia to the world, with direct flights to Cape Town (South Africa), Harare (Zimbabwe), Johannesburg (South Africa), Luanda (Angola), Lusaka (Zambia), Maun (Botswana), and Victoria Falls (Zimbabwe) as well as Frankfurt (Germany). We also expect in the coming weeks direct flights to Doha (Qatar), Amsterdam (Netherlands), Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Gaborone (Botswana) and Durban (South Africa). It also serves domestic destinations such as Walvis Bay, Luderitz and Oranjemund. Hosea Kutako International Airport needs our urgent attention.

The second category is comprised of domestic airports which have air services between Namibian cities. In this category we have Eros, Katima, Ondangwa, Rundu and Luderitz airports.

The Hosea Kutako International Airport, was downgraded in 2014, what led to the downgrade and what measures have you put in place to avoid a similar situation?

Yes, an audit conducted in July 2014 revealed deficiencies in our rescue and firefighting services. I have to emphasize that the audit was not done on NAC but on Namibia as a country.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) was assessing the level of implementation in Namibia of the international aviation standards. Hosea Kutako was downgraded because the capacities did not correspond to the category we were operating. The issues pertained mainly to the number of fire fighting vehicles necessary for our category of operations. Hosea Kutako is classified as category 9 and requires constantly 3 rescue and fire fighting vehicles, associated support services and personnel to man them. We did have in place 3 vehicles but they were not all in good standing.

Since then, we have implemented all the recommendations from our national regulator, DCA.

We have acquired new vehicles and put 4 of them at Hosea Kutako which is above the minimum requirements. We have installed new facilities for refilling the vehicles with water and the firefighting foam. We have recruited additional personnel to be able to operate all vehicles including an ambulance and command post in case of emergency. We also have a control room from which the operators can have a complete view of the apron and aircraft manoeuvring areas and alert the fire personnel as may be required. More recently, during the inspections of the Directorate of Civil Aviation for the licensing of Hosea Kutako, we have established at headquarters and at the airport levels the necessary procedures for the control of the operations and maintenance of the airport.

We have a risk and compliance team approved by the DCA, safety committees at the board, executive and operational levels. As you can see, not only we have put equipment and personnel in place but also the organizational structure to supervise, control and support the operations and maintenance.

This has convinced the DCA to issue to NAC in July 2015, one year after the downgrade a license to operate Hosea Kutako. The license confirms that the airport is operated in conformity with the applicable Namibia regulations.

All those actions, and I insist the organizational structure we put in place at Headquarters and at the airport have put us in a situation where we can prevent a repeat of the 2014 situation and the downgrade.

Safety & security

In pursuit of airport safety and security and in conformity with the applicable civil aviation regulations, NAC was recently awarded with the aerodrome licence for HKIA by DCA.

Under the Civil Aviation Act, an airport is licenced once it is in full conformity with the Namibia requirements on aerodrome licencing and operations as laid down in the Namibia Civil Aviation Regulations (NAMCARs).

During the months of May to July 2015, the DCA inspected HKIA for licencing purposes and the licence was awarded on July, 2015 confirming compliance to the equipment, technical facilities and services for the operations and maintenance of the airport requirements.

The licence was successfully renewed in August 2016.

NAC has established a Board of Directors' sub-committee on Safety and Security Compliance since January, 2015 to lead the implementation of the approved Safety Management System, while a Risk and Compliance Team was established within the Office of the CEO to manage the implementation of the Safety Management System and compliance activities.

The Safety Compliance Manual for HKIA as well as a three-year plan for the implementation of Safety Management System was both approved by DCA in 2014.

Once completed, the current licencing process will enhance the level of

compliance of NAC's airports to national and international safety and security requirements, ultimately contributing to Namibia fulfilling its commitment to licence all international airports by December, 2015 as per the declaration adopted by all African States in Abuja, Nigeria in July 2012.

Hosea Kutako International Airport has been in the media with reports of rehabilitating and extending its runway which is said to cost billions of dollars. When shall we expect this?

Hosea Kutako International Airport as it is now faces two main issues: compliance of the infrastructure with national requirements and level of services. Those are the issues motivating the request submitted to the authorities for the upgrade and expansion of our major international airport. In terms of safety compliance, some of the infrastructure and facilities at HKIA do not meet the safety requirements as set out in Namibia Civil Aviation Regulations (NAMCARs).

There are three important areas for the movement of aircraft, the runway, used to land and take-off, the taxiway, used by the aircraft to manoeuvre from the runway to the places of disembarking passengers, and finally the apron for the parking of the aircraft. There are national requirements for the dimensions, separation distances and surfaces of each area. In this case, the distance between the main taxiway and the main runway below the required separation distance.

Moreover, parts of the aircraft apron are within the area considered to be an obstruction to other aircraft taxiing, landing or taking off. In addition, the total apron area is not sufficiently adequate to permit expeditious handling of the aerodrome traffic at its current maximum density. In terms of level of service, we are looking at the services provided to airlines and passengers.

Comfort for customers

The aircraft apron and passenger terminal are at often congested. In addition to the safety aspects of apron congestion, a "crowded" apron may lead to a perception of "anarchy" by the customers and a negative recollection of their experience and quality of service at HKIA. At the same time, the limited space within the terminal constitutes a constraint to the level of service that NAC could offer to its customers, passengers and airlines at HKIA. More specifically, on departure, there are regularly long queues at check-in, immigration, and security control, due to the limited space available for check-in desks, immigration desks and screening points.

This is particularly acute at times when there are more than one flight checking in at the same time which occurs many times per day.

Also, on arrival, there are long queues at immigration due to the limited space available for immigration desks. The space at the baggage collection area does not permit to install an adequate number of baggage conveyor belts and space for movement of passengers with their baggage. At the same time, it is not possible to segregate traffic (domestic, regional, international) which could contribute to improve the fluidity of the flow of passenger and improve the passenger's experience at HKIA. Finally, the limited space in the passenger terminal does not allow the terminal operator HKIA and the airlines to offer some of the minimum services expected from the airports and airlines even for the premium passengers such as dedicated channels or lounges.

The above are the reasons for initiating the project for upgrading and expanding HKIA. But, of course, the project has to be integrated into the national framework and take into account the economic context and the priorities of the nation.

As a state-owned airport management entity, which means of income does NAC have that complement the state revenue contribution?

Our revenues are mostly generated from what we call aeronautical revenues. Those are generated from services charges paid by passengers and airlines customers (passenger fees, security fees, landing fees and aircraft parking fees). These constitute approximately 80% of our total revenue.

We also have what we call non-aeronautical revenues, which NAC generates through various commercial activities at our airports. We currently get through these activities approximately 20% of our total revenues. Those include car parking, advertising, rental income from office space, shops and restaurants.

The recent expansions at Ondangwa and Walvis Bay increase the opportunities for generating such commercial revenues.

However, the limited space in the passenger terminal at Hosea Kutako has a negative impact on the ability of NAC to generate non-aeronautical revenues as mentioned earlier.

Airports around the world have become the easy targets to attacks as well as being used as the transit of illicit products, have you considered this when upgrading your airports in addition to safety measures you already have in place?

Equipment have been put in place to allow our public services such as police and customs to carry out efficiently their duties of protecting the country from interference to civil aviation and illicit products. I would like to assure you that the facilities and equipment in place at all our airports meet the international standards and are to the satisfaction of the authorities involved in civil aviation security and customs for the screening of passengers and their baggage. No doubt about that.



CEO Tamer El-Kallawi

How would you describe the relationship between NAC, the Directorate of Civil Aviation, Air Namibia and other airline operators?

Well, the Directorate of Civil Aviation (DCA) is our national regulator. It sets and enforces the standards on safety and security. As an aviation services provider, NAC works towards meeting those standards. So, we work very closely with DCA and it provides us with guidance on how to implement at our airport the safety and security standards. In this regard, we have completed for Hosea Kutako, Walvis Bay & Ondangwa Airports the process set by the DCA for the licensing of airports in Namibia. NAC has now received the formal license from DCA for the airports operations at Hosea Kutako, Walvis Bay & Ondangwa. We are following a similar process for all our remaining airports. The enhancement of safety and security compliance is one of our strategic pillars and our relationship with DCA is crucial in achieving that. Both NAC and DCA work closely towards that realization and ultimately a contribution to Namibia meeting its international obligations in terms of safety and security.

As for Air Namibia, the company is not only our national airline, but also our main customer. NAC strives, despite the difficulties and varying levels of infrastructure that I explained at the beginning, to ensure we have an enabling environment for our customers starting from our national airline to conduct its business of transporting passengers. We both have our operational challenges and limitations. But, we work towards the same objectives to contribute each on our own capacity to the economic development of Namibia through offering air transport services and infrastructure for the business and tourist travellers to, within and from Namibia.

NAC engages both DCA and airline operators in all its major undertakings that may impact both. In the case of the completed and on-going projects at Ondangwa, Walvis Bay and other airports, we constantly consult with DCA to ensure safety compliance. We also maintain constant liaison with Air Namibia and all other airlines operators to make sure the facilities that we envisage conform to their expectations. Such are our relationships with our regulator and our main customer.

Being a player in the aviation industry, is the reported lack of qualified personnel a real concern?

Well, the aviation industry, like many sectors of the Namibia economy is yet to have the full range of skills required for the management, operations and maintenance of the facilities and infrastructure.

The reason the shortage is more acute in the aviation industry is primarily due to its complexity and the time it takes for one not only to acquire the technical knowledge, but also matures in terms of skills and exposure to other operational environment.

NAC in particular operates in an industry which is: highly competitive, heavily regulated environment and very complex.

As a company, NAC can only strive to put programs in place to train and develop our staff to maintain the qualifications required our types of activities. Also, as part of our corporate social responsibility, we do sponsor technical training. For instance, we sponsored four young engineers who completed their initial training and we intend to put together a training program to take them through the specialization in the airport industry.

How much has NAC invested this year in corporate social responsibility?

The Namibia Airports Company recognises its key role in national development through the provision of safe and secure airports for all air traffic that departs or arrives in Namibia. According to our turnaround plan we have identified capacity building in aviation related disciplines as a key success factor.

It is no secret that Namibia needs more engineers in general, specifically for us at the Namibia Airports Company we need airport engineers that are capable of conceptualising, developing and managing key aerodrome infrastructure and operations. It is against this background that the company has taken a deliberate decision to develop these airport engineers and related disciplines.

NAC has implemented a bursary scheme in the field of Logistics, Supply Chain Management and Engineering Services focussing on electrical, mechanical and civil disciplines. The estimated total investment towards these bursaries amounts to N\$1 002 600.00 which caters for tuition fees, text books, accommodation, information technology equipment, transport and a monthly allowance for each student.

NAC has registered the graduate Trainees with the Engineering Council to develop and train them to fully fledged engineers in three years.

An in-house training programme is in place to develop civil and electrical engineering expertise over three years' period in airport planning, maintenance and design in line with Annexure 14 of ICAO Regulations. The total investment programme is estimated to cost NAC approximately N\$6,5 million over the three years' period.

Namibia Airports Company recently sponsored a train-the-trainer course for five Namibian Police members of the Aviation security division who attended a course on all astrophysics security equipment in the USA from 6 – 16 August 2016.

The objective was to train them as trainers with the view to become instructors on all astrophysics equipment – x-ray security technology – at all eight NAC owned and managed airports.

The Namibia Airports Company (NAC) on 14 June 2016 awarded eight bursaries worth over N\$1 Million in the field of logistics, supply chain management and engineering services focussing on electrical, mechanical and civil disciplines.

A further N\$500 000 was donated towards the successful hosting of the 2016 edition of the Dr Hage Geingob Cup while the Ericah Shafudah Education Trust

received N\$30 000 and the Namibia National AIDS conference a donation of N\$50 000.

What is your response to some media reports pertaining to the airport scanners procured by the Namibia Airports Company?

We would like to inform our valued stakeholders and concerned members of the public that the Namibia Airports Company refutes in the strongest possible terms the untruthful and misleading manner in which technical specifications and functionality of airport scanners at Hosea Kutako International Airport (HKIA) have been portrayed to the public in the certain newspaper articles.

NAC hereby emphatically avers that all scanners and metal detectors at NAC airports comply with prescribed international standards for airport security screening equipment. The new airport scanners have been procured in accordance with requisite security specifications that have been provided by our regulator, the Directorate of Civil Aviation (DCA) in the Ministry of Works and Transport.

We further wish to draw the public's attention to the fact that luggage scanners and metal detectors are two separate types of security screening equipment that are used for different screening purposes and both our metal detectors and luggage scanners are compliant to the said international standards. NAC is in fact proud to enlighten the public that apart from the security screening equipment at our airport being compliant with DCA specifications in the manner aforesaid, 75 major airports in the USA, Canada, and Europe are presently utilizing exactly the same airport security screening equipment that NAC currently uses at HKIA and all the other airports on account of their compliance to prescribed international security requirements and their effectiveness.

We wish to assure our valued stakeholders that in line with the NAC's three-year strategic plan (2014-17), compliance with international and local safety and security standards at all airports is priority number one.

We trust the above enlightenment serves to allay any concerns that the public may have had regarding the actual state of affairs in respect of security screening equipment at NAC airports and we humbly request that in the future due consideration should be given to security of the state prior to publication of articles that could have adverse repercussions on issues of national security.

Talk to us about the future and general airports developments as contained in Namibia Airports Company plans?

Our Strategic Plan 2014-2017 is aligned to Namibia's vision 2030. We aim by 2017 to continue to rehabilitate five airports to improve the level of compliance to national and international standards, and upgrade 3 airports to meet capacity requirements. Ultimately, once those projects are achieved, NAC will have contributed its part of vision 2030 by providing a modern infrastructure as one of the basic enablers to facilitate and support the economic priorities in logistics and tourism.

Do you think the performance of the transport and logistics sector has been encouraging this year?

The transport and logistics sector in Namibia has been affected by the overall international volatile economic environment. As an airport operator, we are rather at receiving end and can only do our small part to support our customer's airlines and stakeholders by continuing to provide the facilities and logistics they need for their services.

What initiatives has NAC put in place to improve service delivery this year?

The initiatives we have put in 2015 will only start bearing fruits in the coming years. In our revised internal structure, we have a dedicated Business Strategy Unit that is now looking specifically at the needs of our strategic customers and stakeholders. It allows to be closer to the customers and stakeholders, get to understand better their challenges and needs and address them as expeditiously as we can within our limited resources.

What have been NAC's challenges in terms of efficient service delivery this year and how have you dealt with them?

Our challenges remain the limited capacities of the infrastructure at our airports in terms of passenger terminal. Space is definitely required in order to increase our offerings of services to passengers at the airports. In this regard, we have re-organized the departure area at Hosea Kutako International Airport to improve the flow of passengers through the security checks and immigration. We have also introduced a new baggage handling system to improve the process of baggage at check-in. We now have new passenger terminals at Walvis Bay and Ondangwa and other similar projects are on track.