

Air Namibia taps into Asian market

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WINDHOEK – The recently signed memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Air Namibia and Turkish Airlines is expected to eventually result in numerous business and tourism benefits for Namibia, an optimistic Honorary Consul for Namibia in Turkey, Hatem Yavuz, said yesterday. “If Air Namibia can cater for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) then the alliance with Turkish Airlines has the potential to turn Windhoek into a transit hub for the region,” Yavuz explained to New Era from Istanbul, Turkey, saying the agreement is a great marketing opportunity for Namibia to attract visitors from Turkey, eastern Europe and Central Asia .

Turkish Airlines operates from two Istanbul airports and a new airport that will cater for about 150 million passengers a year and be ready in 2017 is under construction.

Turkish Airlines currently has more than 260 aircraft in operation and with another 250 planes on order it will soon be one of the biggest airlines in the world. “Even if only some of the Turkish Airlines passengers are in transit in Namibia they will still be able to experience the land of wide open spaces for themselves and this could result in many of them coming back as tourists,” added Yavuz.

According to a statement by Air Namibia the just signed agreement would culminate in a number of specific agreements covering different specific and envisaged areas of cooperation. This milestone is in line with the two airlines’ strategies of promoting “airline to

airline” cooperation with the view to strengthening the respective airlines. The envisaged cooperation with Turkish Airlines goes beyond cooperation on commercial aspects as it includes operational and technical, training and service level improvements.

The agreement was signed by the Chief Investment and Technology Officer of Turkish Airlines, Dr Ahmet Bolat, and Air Namibia Managing Director, Theo Namases, in Istanbul on March 11, 2014. It seeks to enhance commercial cooperation between the two airlines and enhance air traffic for passengers and cargo between Namibia and Turkey.

The MoU also seeks to facilitate human capital development and training, coordinated network development, strengthen operating and technical capabilities of Air Namibia, as well as overall improvement of Air Namibia’s service standards and efficiency levels.

“This cooperative agreement is in line with our roadmap that will see Air Namibia build a strong business, strengthen our route network, improve commercial agility and service standards, better our already high dispatch reliability, as well as human capital development aspects. Turkish Airlines is a good benchmark for us, given their ‘record high’ achievements over the last couple of years, including being crowned the ‘Best Airline in Europe’ three years in a row including the year 2013,” said Namases.

Said Dr Bolat: “We are pleased to announce that a commercial cooperation agreement has been reached between Turkish Airlines and Air Namibia. This cooperation is an instance in the construction of global aeronautical services by Turkish Airlines together with the top partners of the aviation industry. Turkish Airlines is highly focused on Africa concerning its expansion plans on its flight services, as well as other related services. By building a bridge between Turkey and Namibia via our Istanbul hub we are also strengthening our presence in the top emerging market economy in the region.”

According to aviation industry insiders, Turkish Airlines initially favoured sealing a deal with Angola’s national airline but Namibia was deemed the next best option after Emirates Airlines signed an operational and commercial cooperation agreement with TAAG Angola Airlines. This deal involves developing an operational and commercial cooperation between TAAG and Emirates in the areas of training, passenger and cargo services and frequent flyer programmes.

By Edgar Brandt
