

NEW FOCUSED AVIATION TRADE SHOW FOR SA

RUMOURS CIRCULATING in aviation industry circles in the past few weeks about the possibility of a new trade exhibition, were confirmed last month by Johannesburg - based Duma Exhibitions which announced the launch of AIR Africa 2009 to be held at Gallagher Estate, Midrand from March 25 to 27 next year.

Described as “a new focussed trade exhibition for the aviation services industry in Africa”, the exhibition is the brainchild of wellknown Ms. Lynn Browne who, until last year, had been involved in the organisation of the country’s only other aviation trade exhibition, originally known as Aviation Africa, and now as Africa Aerospace and Defence, since the late 1970s.

AIR (standing for Aviation Industry Rendezvous) Africa 2009 will be bringing a new concept in aviation exhibitions to South Africa. With no flying displays and no public, the exhibition will be focused on business-to-business matchmaking. The three-day event will be aimed directly at the trade for the trade with the standard of visitors being quality rather than quantity.

As Brown explained to *World Airnews*: “AIR Africa 2009 is going to be a cost-effective, strictly business-to-business exhibition. It will not be open to the general public thus promoting and creating an environment highly conducive to ‘doing business’.

“Research by Duma Exhibitions has shown that the aviation industry in South Africa, and indeed the whole continent, has long wanted and needed such an exhibition,” Browne said, adding: “AIR Africa 2009 will showcase the entire range of hardware and services available to the business, general aviation and airline industries.

“It is being expressly created to attract key buyers and decision-makers in airlines corporate flight departments, charter operators, the owner/pilot and the private aviation and training sectors.

“The exhibition will bring these people together with an unrivalled gathering of exhibitors displaying a wide range of the latest equipment and services for this strategic industry,” she said.

Browne likened the planned structure of the exhibition to that of the annual convention and exhibition of the National Business Aircraft Association (NBAA) held in the United States which is something, she reit-

erated, that the African industry had wanted for some time.

“If aircraft distributors at the exhibition want to demonstrate their aircraft to potential clients, they can transfer them by car to the nearby Grand Central Airport from where such demonstration flights can be operated without the restriction of show planes doing aerobatics and what-have-you. This is how they operate at NBAA and it has proved highly successful,” she pointed out.

SHOWS CLASHING?

Coming a scant six months after the Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) expo, AIR Africa was not being planned as a competitor, but rather as a complimentary exhibition, explained Browne.



“Having studied the international trends in the aviation industry, we noticed with interest the growth of the business aviation exhibition phenomenon. The event is based purely on a business-to-business meeting format, a three-day event with no flying and no general public. These events are growing around the world and take place alongside the traditional events, for example EBACE in Geneva, a matter of weeks before either the Paris or Farnborough air shows.

“AIR Africa will take place at Gallagher Estate in the very heart of Gauteng – the hub of the aviation industry in South Africa” she added.

HEADING THE LIST

With the growing shortage of pilots in many areas of the world and especially in South Africa where the more experienced pilots are being lured to areas such as the Middle East, the advantages offered by the local training industry are likely to see this sector making up a large portion of the exhibition area.

The currently weakening Rand against most major currencies means that overseas student pilots can obtain training in South Africa at a fraction of the cost they would have to pay in their home countries. With

these comparatively low prices matched against the high standard of training comparable with some of the best in the world, the South African training industry has much to offer potential students from elsewhere in Africa and overseas.

Aircraft maintenance organisations (AMO), both airframe and other spheres such as avionics, are also seen as likely exhibitors, especially those from the Gauteng area whose premises will be the proverbial “stone’s throw” from Gallagher Estate. As is the case with aircraft demonstrations, AMO personnel can transport potential customers to their respective workshops for an on-the-spot inspection if required.

One of the first companies to sign up for AIR Africa 2009 was Lanseria-headquartered National Airways Corporation, arguably one of the biggest general aviation companies in the country. Asked to comment on its reasons, a spokesperson for the company said: “The Aviation Industry Rendezvous, with the emphasis on business-to-business for the African aviation services industry, is a tremendous platform for NAC to showcase its products and services. As this is a first of its kind on the continent, we hope to watch it grow into the likes of the internationally renowned NBAA.”

FACE-TO-FACE

Explaining the matchmaking focus AIR Africa will be offering exhibitors, Browne said: “This will be an unique business-to-business matchmaking programme specially developed by Duma Exhibitions which will ensure that exhibitors meet face-to-face with clearly identified, pre-profiled buyers and decision-makers.

“This business approach, combining face-to-face meetings and networking services for visitors and delegates from all sectors, will be free to all AIR Africa 2009 exhibitors and pre-registered visitors,” she told *World Airnews*.

Why Gallagher Estate? “One of the reasons this venue was chosen was because of its close proximity to Grand Central Airport.

“In addition, the facilities provide over 27 000 square metres of space complete with off-street access, loading bays, ducted electricity, communication and water reticulation systems and well over 10 000 parking bays,” Lynn Browne concluded. →