

# ETIHAD CARGO AND ASTRAL AVIATION CELEBRATE INAUGURAL FLIGHT

News / Airlines



**Etihad Cargo in partnership with Astral Aviation successfully completed the inaugural flight from Nairobi, Kenya, to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on 21 March 2024. This flight marked the commencement of a promising collaboration following the MOU signed between the two carriers, aimed at expanding Etihad Cargo's reach into the African market. The inaugural flight was strategically timed to accommodate the increased demand for flowers, demonstrating the synergy between Etihad Cargo's global reach and Astral Aviation's strong African network. The successful operation underscored the partnership's potential to enhance cargo capacity and offer efficient logistics solutions, particularly for time-sensitive shipments such as perishable goods.**

Under the MOU, which will see Astral Aviation operating more flights to the UAE's capital, supported by the UAE's national carrier, Etihad Cargo and Astral Aviation have committed to leveraging their combined networks, expertise, and logistics capabilities to enhance cargo services between the UAE and Africa. This partnership is a testament to both airlines' commitment to providing innovative and customer-centric solutions, ensuring high-quality service across their operations. Following the success of the inaugural flight, Astral Aviation will resume weekly

operations from Abu Dhabi starting 28 March 2024. This regular service is anticipated to further strengthen trade links between the UAE and Africa, catering to a wide range of cargo needs and fostering economic growth in both regions.

Stanislas Brun, Vice President Cargo of Etihad Cargo, commented: "The successful inaugural flight from Nairobi to Abu Dhabi is just the beginning of Etihad Cargo's ambitious journey with Astral Aviation. Together, Etihad Cargo and Astral Aviation will offer air cargo solutions that cater to the dynamic needs of partners and customers, especially in the fast-growing African market."

Wilson Chan, Senior Vice President – Freezone Cargo & Logistics of Abu Dhabi Airports, said: "Expanding cargo operations to and from Zayed International Airport is a key component of our plan to ensure Abu Dhabi continues to strengthen its global standing as an air cargo hub. From state-of-the-art cooling facilities capable of safely transporting temperature-controlled goods and pharmaceuticals, to a significant increase in operational capacity, Zayed International Airport is helping to foster greater trade between Abu Dhabi and the world. This inaugural flight, and the commencement of weekly flights to Nairobi, is further evidence of the important commercial and business ties Abu Dhabi Airports, and our partners Etihad Airways and Astral Aviation, are helping to facilitate."

Sanjeev Gadhia, CEO of Astral Aviation, stated: "The partnership between Etihad Cargo and Astral Aviation marks a significant milestone in trade between Africa and Abu Dhabi, as the new flight will enable the efficient transportation of perishables including flowers, fresh fruits, vegetables and meat from Astral's hubs in Nairobi and Johannesburg into Etihad's Abu Dhabi hub and onto their network. On the return, the freighter will carry cargo from Etihad Cargo's network in Asia, the USA, and Europe into Astral's Intra African network, which will result in new opportunities for our respective clients."

In addition to the weekly flights launched in partnership with Astral Aviation, Etihad Cargo will provide additional belly capacity to its partners and customers via daily passenger flights to Nairobi from 1 May 2024. Etihad Cargo also operates a weekly freighter service that connects Nairobi to Amsterdam via the carrier's Abu Dhabi hub.

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