

By Titus Kakembo

As tensions between Iran and the United States ripple through global aviation corridors, Uganda Airlines is tightening its focus on resilience - leaning on regional strength while cautiously rebuilding its long-haul network in an increasingly unpredictable sky.

Industry-wide, the conflict has triggered re-routing of flights, rising insurance premiums and volatile jet fuel prices-cost pressures that are particularly acute for emerging carriers. For Uganda Airlines, the strategy now is less about aggressive expansion and more about disciplined growth anchored in stability.

HOLDING STEADY

At the Uganda National Airline Company Limited's 4th Annual General Meeting (AGM) held on April 22 at the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, the airline presented results that suggest it is holding steady despite the turbulence.

Revenue rose by 32% from sh547b in the 2023/24 financial year to sh437.3b in 2024/25. Over the same period, net losses narrowed by 27%, pointing to a gradual but deliberate shift toward financial sustainability.

This performance comes against a difficult global backdrop. Airspace closures and restricted flight paths across parts of the Middle East have complicated long-haul operations,

Uganda Airlines' preparation to global aviation shocks



Priscilla Serukka

forcing airlines to take longer routes that consume more fuel and increase turnaround times. Insurance costs have also risen as risk profiles shift.

Uganda Airlines' leadership says the response has been to build buffers rather than chase scale.

STABILISING APPOINTMENT

Acting Chief Executive Officer Girma Wake, whose appointment has been widely viewed as a stabilising move, is steering the airline through what officials describe as a recalibration phase for global aviation.

Speaking at the AGM, State Minister for Privatisation and Investment Evelyn

STRENGTHENING INTERNAL SYSTEMS

Board chairperson Priscilla Mirembe Serukka said the airline is transitioning from a start-up phase to a more profit-driven venture with shock-resistant operations.

"The reduction in net losses and growth in revenue show we are on the right path. At the same time, we are strengthening internal systems to withstand global shocks," she said.

She cited growth in connecting passenger traffic, expansion of cargo services and stronger linkages with local suppliers as key drivers of recent gains - particularly as global supply chains face renewed strain.

Fleet flexibility is also playing a role. Uganda Airlines now operates seven aircraft, including a leased unit, allowing it to adjust capacity across routes in response to demand fluctuations and geopolitical developments.

Anite, representing Finance Minister Matia Kasaija, expressed confidence in the airline's direction.

GOVERNMENT REAFFIRMATION

"Government is confident that his vast experience comes at the right time, especially when the aviation sector is facing external shocks globally. Uganda Airlines is better positioned to navigate them," she said.

Government reaffirmed its commitment to continued financial backing, a critical factor as airlines worldwide contend with thinner margins and heightened uncertainty.

Works and Transport Minister Gen. Katumba Wamala noted that the carrier's progress stands out given the shifting dynamics in international aviation. "The global aviation landscape is changing rapidly, particularly with disruptions to traditional long-haul corridors. Despite this, Uganda Airlines continues to build resilience and maintain growth," he said.

REGIONAL COMMAND

A key pillar of that resilience is regional dominance. The airline now commands more than 38% of passenger traffic at Entebbe International Airport, with

African routes proving to be a reliable revenue base.

Within the continent, Uganda Airlines accounts for 38% of passengers and generates 49% of its revenue from Entebbe operations - evidence of a deliberate pivot toward markets less exposed to geopolitical shocks.

Since its launch in August 2019, the national carrier has expanded to 17 destinations across Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Asia. However, routes to the Gulf and beyond are being managed with caution as conflict-related risks continue to evolve.

EXPANSION TO 32 DESTINATIONS

Looking ahead, the airline plans to expand to 32 destinations over the next decade while investing in core infrastructure such as a maintenance hangar, cargo facilities and enhanced passenger services.

However, experts caution that sustained access to working capital will be essential to maintain liquidity as external pressures persist.

In a recent operational boost, the airline returned its Airbus A330-800neo to service, with flights to Dubai resuming on April 17, 2026. While this strengthens long-haul capacity, such routes remain highly sensitive to geopolitical disruptions.