

Ethiopian Airlines selects Inmarsat's GX Aviation



From left to right: André Schneider, VP Cabin & Cargo Program, Airbus; Mesfin Tasew, Group Chief Executive Officer, Ethiopian Airlines; Don Buchman, General Manager and Vice President Commercial Aviation, Viasat; Niels Steenstrup, President, Aviation, Inmarsat

[Ethiopian Airlines](#) announced at the Aircraft Interiors Expo (AIX) in Hamburg that it will offer advanced, high-speed inflight broadband to passengers aboard its upcoming A350-1000 aircraft. The airline has partnered with Inmarsat, recently acquired by [Viasat](#), to provide GX Aviation, selected through the Airbus Airspace Link HBCplus program.

Regarding the new service, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mr. Mesfin Tasew said in a June 8 press release, "As we endeavour to maintain our position as Africa's number one and among the leading airlines globally, we know one of the key success factors is giving our passengers the best possible onboard experience. Connectivity is a crucial part of our services and products; and bringing Inmarsat's best-in-class GX Aviation service to our passengers, as part of Airbus' HBCplus program, is a major step forward. We want to give our passengers the possibility to stream, surf, and chat from thousands of feet in the air, no matter where their route or destination is. Inmarsat's seamless, truly global inflight connectivity will be vital to deliver this. We look forward to a very successful partnership with Inmarsat and Airbus, now and in the years to come."

As one of the launch airlines for inflight connectivity (IFC) under Airbus' HBCplus program, Ethiopian Airlines aims to meet the rapidly growing passenger demand for staying connected while flying. The collaboration with Airbus streamlines the order process, ensuring the airline can efficiently meet the

increasing demand for connectivity.

According to Inmarsat's latest Passenger Experience Survey, 97 percent of respondents use their personal devices for entertainment, work, and staying in touch with loved ones during flights. Additionally, 82 percent of passengers are more likely to choose an airline that offers quality inflight Wi-Fi, highlighting the importance of reliable connectivity for travellers.

Niels Steenstrup, President, Aviation, Inmarsat, said in the same release, "We were selected as the first managed services provider (MSP) for the Airbus HBCplus program last year, with a scope that includes connectivity, digital portal services and ISP capability. The fact that we have already been selected by two leading airlines is a great achievement and we are excited about delivering our award-winning GX Aviation inflight broadband to Ethiopian Airlines' passengers starting from next year. This will enable them to stream videos, browse the internet, shop online, enjoy social media and more, all from the comfort of their seats and using their personal devices."

The delivery of Ethiopian Airlines' first A350-1000 aircraft is scheduled for the third quarter of 2024. Passengers onboard these aircraft will have access to GX Aviation's top-of-the-line connectivity technology, aligning with the airline's Vision 2035 Strategy. This strategy focuses on expanding the fleet, enhancing the passenger experience, and maintaining Ethiopian Airlines' leading position in the industry.

GX Aviation, powered by Inmarsat's Global Xpress satellite network, ensures world-class connectivity on every aircraft, regardless of the route or passenger count. To further enhance its network, Inmarsat plans to introduce seven additional satellite payloads by 2025, boosting its Ka-band network fleet to 12.

The expansion includes the launch of two Inmarsat-6 satellites, both of which have already been deployed, as well as two payloads in a highly elliptical orbit. These satellites enable commercial mobile broadband services on flights in higher latitudes and across the Arctic, ensuring uninterrupted connectivity on high-elevation routes. Furthermore, three more satellites will be launched into geostationary orbit, providing increased speed, capacity, and resilience.

Andre Schneider, Airbus VP of Cabin and Cargo Program, said in the same press release, "We are delighted that Ethiopian Airlines has selected our agnostic and flexible high-bandwidth connectivity solution — HBCplus. This is a further endorsement from our valued airline customers of the confidence they place in Airbus to devise and integrate enhanced inflight capabilities for their passengers to experience. Airspace Link HBCplus provides satcom-based off-board connectivity for the Airspace Link open ecosystem, available both in line fit and retrofit. Initially encompassing Ka-band services, it will enable the airline to connect to a choice of Managed Service Providers (MSPs), in this case with Inmarsat — via a new certified terminal and antenna built as part of the aircraft."