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Analysis of the issue of appointing public representatives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo through the lens of the Ishikawa diagram: A study conducted at the Régie des voies Aériennes (RVA) from 2006 to 2026

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the recurring issue of the appointment of public officials in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, using the Régie des Voies Aériennes (RVA) as a case study for the period 2006–2026. An analysis of the root causes of instability at the helm of this strategic enterprise reveals systemic failings: a lack of transparency in selection processes, persistent political interference, the absence of objective evaluation of appointments, and a frequent mismatch between the profiles of those appointed and the

RVA's core missions, namely air traffic safety and security, the collection of charges, the development and construction of airports, and staff training. A comparison of these practices with the international governance standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the IPSAS accounting standards highlights a major structural discrepancy. The instability of senior management teams, illustrated by appointments between 2020 and 2026, appears to be a symptom of a system in which political considerations take precedence over requirements for competence and performance. The article proposes operational recommendations to establish a transparent appointment process, based on merit and aligned with international standards.

Keywords: Public officials, governance, Ishikawa diagram, DRC, RVA, aviation safety, international standards, ILO, OECD, IPSAS, transparency, public performance.

1. Introduction

1.1. General context

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, rich in natural resources and endowed with considerable economic potential, has a public and quasi-public sector that is strategic to its development. Public enterprises, whether operating in the energy, mining, transport or communications sectors, are key drivers of the state's economic policy. Among these, the Régie des Voies Aériennes (RVA) occupies a special place due to its crucial role in the connectivity of a country of continental dimensions and in the safety of air transport.

The governance of public enterprises is a major challenge for the DRC. The concept of governance – understood as the set of structures, systems and practices that enable an entity to delegate decision-making powers, establish decision-making processes and oversee the delivery of its services – is at the heart of reformers' concerns. In the public sector, good governance is based on the fundamental principles of accountability, leadership, integrity, stewardship and transparency. When these principles are effectively implemented, they ensure that public resources are managed in the public interest and that decisions are taken in an informed and legitimate manner.

Corporate governance, beyond its managerial dimension, is a strategic framework that ensures the legitimacy, transparency and accountability of decisions. It reconciles the interests of shareholders and stakeholders, drawing on the balance between the Board of Directors and senior management. In the face of modern challenges, steering an organisation's governance becomes a driver of trust and performance.

1.2. The RVA: a strategic public enterprise

The Régie des Voies Aériennes is the public enterprise responsible for managing civil air transport in the DRC. Its core mission rests on four inseparable pillars:

1. Ensuring air safety and air navigation: this involves implementing the standards of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), maintaining navigation equipment, training air traffic controllers, and guaranteeing a safe airspace for users.

2. Collecting aviation and non-aviation charges on its own behalf: this financial remit is essential to the agency's financial autonomy. It includes the collection of landing, airfield lighting and parking charges, as well as fees relating to airport services (car parks, shops, etc.).

3. Developing existing airports and building new ones: the RVA is responsible for modernising airport infrastructure, notably N'djili International Airport in Kinshasa, and for developing new airports to improve the country's connectivity.

4. Providing ongoing training for its staff: training is essential in a constantly evolving technical sector, where safety and reliability depend on the competence of staff.

These tasks are all the more important given that air transport is a key driver of economic activity, tourism and international trade. The RVA thus finds itself at the crossroads of issues relating to safety, economic development and public service.

1.3. The issue: chronic instability at the helm of the RVA

For more than two decades, the RVA has faced chronic instability in its leadership. Publicly appointed officials – the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and Chair of the Board of Directors – have come and gone at a rapid pace, often under circumstances that raise questions about the continuity and effectiveness of management. This instability is illustrated by recent events that have made the headlines.

However, between 2020 and 2026, a number of ill-timed appointments took place, notably that of Louis Blaise Londole as Director-General of the RVA (confirmed following an interim period), Vincent Futa as Deputy Director-General, and the reappointment of Tryphon Kin-Kiey Mulumba as Chair of the Board of Directors. These appointments were made to replace Ngoma Mbaki, who was suspended following a disruption at N'djili International Airport.

This incident, which nearly turned into a tragedy, warrants close scrutiny. During the night of 11–12 September 2025, N'djili Airport was plunged into darkness due to a power cut, preventing the aircraft carrying the Head of State from landing for three-quarters of an hour[6]. The cause of this power cut? An 'inverter' – an electrical device used to switch to a backup power source, which was around ten years old and had failed. According to information gathered, the RVA's technical director had, four months earlier, brought the need to purchase a new inverter, at a cost of 20,000 dollars, to the attention of the managing director. However, the repair was reportedly entrusted to a third-party company offering the lowest bid of $8,000, thereby compromising the system's reliability[7]. This incident has been described as 'widespread laxity' by some observers, highlighting failings in the chain of responsibility within the RVA.

Beyond individual cases, the issue is systemic: what are the root causes of the inefficiency and the failure of the RVA's agent appointment process to align with international governance standards?

The main objective is to analyse the root causes of the problem concerning the appointment of RVA representatives between 2006 and 2026.

Thus, this research is of threefold interest. From a theoretical perspective, it proposes an original application of the Ishikawa diagram to a little-explored field: the governance of public enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa. From a practical perspective, it offers a tool for analysis and diagnosis to Congolese public decision-makers. From a comparative perspective, it enables Congolese practices to be assessed against international standards.

2. Conceptual framework and methodology

2.1. Conceptual framework

2.1.1. Governance of public enterprises

Governance is a multifaceted concept that refers to the set of processes, functions, structures, rules and standards that govern relations between the stakeholders of an organisation and guide its decisions[9]. It defines the arrangements for the distribution of power, the control mechanisms and the accountability arrangements.

In the public sector, governance takes on a particular dimension. According to the CCAF-FCVI, it encompasses the structures, systems and practices that enable an entity to: delegate decision-making powers and set its strategic direction; oversee the delivery of its services and the implementation of its policies; and produce a performance report on the achievement of its intended outcomes. The fundamental principles of good public governance are:

- Accountability: the obligation of an individual or entity to answer for the exercise of a responsibility entrusted to them.

- Leadership: the 'tone set' by senior management, which plays a vital role in encouraging the adoption of good governance practices.

- Integrity: acting impartially and ethically, in the public interest, in compliance with the law and by upholding high standards of professionalism.

- Stewardship: managing resources on behalf of the public, in such a way as to maintain or improve the organisation's ability to serve the public interest.

- Transparency: making decisions and actions accessible to all by providing comprehensive, accurate and clear information.

In a company, governance is distinct from management. Governance sets the strategic direction and makes decisions, whilst management translates these choices into operational plans. The board of directors approves the strategy, whilst senior management implements it on a day-to-day basis. This distinction is fundamental: it implies that directors, including public representatives, must not intervene in day-to-day management, but must focus on vision, control and supervision.

2.1.2. The public representative: definition and responsibilities

A public director is an individual appointed to manage a public enterprise, a public utility or a parastatal institution. They act on behalf of the State and are accountable for the management of public funds. The public director is both a representative of the shareholder (the State) and a manager responsible for the organisation's performance.

The role of the public trustee is complex: they must reconcile public service objectives (safety, accessibility, continuity) with economic performance requirements (profitability, efficiency). They are also subject to specific constraints: oversight by supervisory authorities, transparency requirements, and the obligation to be accountable to Parliament and the public.

Within the RVA framework, the main representatives are:

- The Chief Executive (CE): responsible for day-to-day management, the implementation of strategy and the agency's performance.

- The Deputy Director-General (DGA): supports the DG in his duties and acts as his deputy in his absence.

- The Chair of the Board of Directors (PCA): chairs the decision-making body which sets strategic directions and oversees the DG's management.

2.1.3. The core missions of the RVA

The RVA was established to fulfil four main missions, which form the basis of its purpose and activities:

1. Ensuring aviation safety and air navigation: this is the most crucial mission. It involves the management of Congolese airspace, the maintenance of navigation equipment (radars, beacons, communication systems), the certification of airports, and the training of air traffic controllers. Aviation safety is a responsibility that affects the lives of passengers and the country's reputation.

2. Collecting aviation and non-aviation charges on its own behalf: this financial mission is vital to the authority's financial autonomy. It includes the collection of landing, airfield lighting and parking charges, as well as fees relating to airport services (commercial lettings, car parks, etc.). The RVA's performance depends largely on its ability to optimise this collection.

3. Developing existing airports and building new ones: the RVA is responsible for the modernisation and development of airport infrastructure. This includes the refurbishment of runways, the construction of new terminals, and the expansion of existing airports to meet changing traffic patterns and international standards.

4. Providing ongoing training for its staff: training is essential in a constantly evolving technical sector. Air traffic controllers, maintenance technicians and managers must receive regular training to maintain their skills and adapt to new technologies.

2.1.4. The ILO's approach: transparency, merit and tripartism

The International Labour Organisation, through its conventions and institutional practices, sets out precise standards regarding the selection and appointment of public servants. Convention No. 111 (1958) concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation forms the normative basis: it requires that selection be based exclusively on competence and qualifications, without discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion or social origin[20]. In the context of the RVA, this principle is systematically violated when appointments are driven by political patronage or tribal favouritism, as illustrated by the appointments made in February 2026.

The ILO's practices regarding the recruitment of its own experts offer valuable lessons. A judgement by the ILO Administrative Tribunal states that 'a selection process for the recruitment of public officials must, by its very nature, be based on the results of an examination, but also on all other relevant assessment criteria'. Among these factors, 'particular consideration must be given to the candidates' qualifications and professional experience, which, in itself, constitutes a selection criterion'. This case law emphasises the importance of multidimensional assessment procedures, incorporating both formal tests and an evaluation of professional backgrounds.

The recent debate within the ILO on the selection of experts for the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) highlights practical measures that should be adopted:

- A broad and transparent call for applications: several Member States are calling for vacancy notices to be published 'in reputable international journals and newspapers, as well as online', in order to ensure the widest possible dissemination.

- Selection based on qualifications and impartiality: experts must be 'recognised and impartial experts with the necessary technical expertise and independence'.

- Geographical balance and gender parity: the ILO endeavours to ensure a balance between regions and between genders in the composition of its bodies.

- Distinct roles for political and technical bodies: there is a 'clear distinction between the technical role of its experts and the clear political role of the tripartite bodies'. This separation is essential to preserve the integrity and independence of the selection processes.

2.1.5. The OECD framework: A model for the governance of public enterprises

The OECD Guidelines on the Governance of State-Owned Enterprises (2024) constitute the most comprehensive international benchmark in this field. They set out specific requirements regarding the composition and functioning of the boards of directors of state-owned enterprises.

1. Appointment based on qualifications and merit

The OECD requires that ‘all directors, including civil servants, be designated or appointed on the basis of their qualifications relevant to the sector of activity and the company’s profile’. Appointments must therefore be based on proven competence, not on political considerations. The RVA, where appointments are driven by networking considerations, is in complete contradiction to this principle.

2. Independence of the board of directors and limits on political interference

The OECD stipulates that ‘politicians who are in a position to significantly influence the conditions under which public enterprises operate should not sit on the boards of such enterprises’. This provision aims to prevent conflicts of interest and to guarantee the independence of board members. At the RVA, political interference is rife: appointments and dismissals are decided by the Presidency and the relevant ministries, without any independence.

The OECD also requires that “mechanisms be put in place to avoid conflicts of interest that might prevent any director from performing their duties objectively and to limit political interference in the functioning of the board of directors”. The complete absence of such mechanisms at the RVA contributes to the instability and inefficiency of its governance.

3. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities

The board of directors of a public enterprise ‘should be given a clear mandate and bear ultimate responsibility for the public enterprise’s results’. It should ‘have the power to appoint and dismiss the chief executive’. At the RVA, the Board of Directors is deprived of this power: appointments and dismissals are made directly by the executive, which renders the Board meaningless.

4. Regular performance evaluation

The OECD requires that the board of directors “carry out, at regular intervals, a systematic assessment of its performance and effectiveness” [33]. Such an assessment is non-existent at the RVA, where directors are not subject to any periodic assessment, and where suspensions are imposed on a discretionary basis.

5. Transparency and disclosure of information

Public enterprises ‘should disclose and make public all material information concerning them in accordance with rigorous, internationally recognised standards’. The OECD recommends, in particular, the publication of:

- ‘The governance structure, capital structure and legal status’ of the company.

- ‘The remuneration of directors and senior executives’.

- ‘The composition of the board of directors and its directors, including their qualifications and the procedure for appointing directors’.

At RVA, there is a complete lack of transparency: the criteria for appointment, remuneration and qualifications of directors are not published, in flagrant breach of OECD standards.

2.1.6. IPSAS: Financial transparency and accountability

The International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) are international accounting standards applicable to the public sector. They aim to strengthen transparency, accountability and the effectiveness of public financial management. As the OECD Guidelines emphasise, ‘public enterprises should adhere to rigorous standards of transparency, accountability and integrity and be subject to the same high standards of accounting, reporting, compliance and auditing as listed companies’.

The adoption of IPSAS is based on a fundamental principle: ‘sound public accounting increases transparency and accountability by providing accurate and complete information on the government’s financial position, which is crucial to the decision-making process regarding the allocation of resources’. To this end, IPSAS require:

- Accrual accounting: revenue is recognised when it is due, not when it is received. This provides a more accurate picture of the financial position.

- Comprehensive measurement and presentation of assets and liabilities: fixed assets, debts, pensions and commitments must be recognised and valued.

- The production of comparable financial statements: financial statements that present a true and fair view of the financial position, performance and cash flows.

Practical application of IPSAS to the RVA

For the RVA, the adoption of IPSAS would have major implications:

- Transparency regarding fees collected: the collection of aviation and non-aviation fees should be subject to rigorous accounting and the regular publication of financial statements.

- Valuation and management of assets: airports, navigation equipment, buildings and infrastructure should be valued, recorded in the accounts and depreciated.

- Liability management: commitments, debts and provisions (in particular staff pensions) should be recognised and valued.

- Performance assessment: financial performance indicators (collection rates, profitability, productivity) could be defined, enabling an objective assessment of those entrusted with management.

The DRC, like Nigeria and Kenya, has embarked on the path towards adopting IPSAS. A Congolese researcher emphasises that ‘the adoption of IPSAS standards in public accounting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a key lever for strengthening financial transparency and combating corruption and mismanagement’. However, implementation faces obstacles similar to those encountered elsewhere in Africa: high implementation costs, insufficient technical expertise, the need for capacity building, delays in the valuation of legacy assets, and resistance to change on the part of certain officials.

2.2. Methodology

2.2.1. Research approach

We adopt an exploratory qualitative approach, suited to the analysis of complex and poorly documented social phenomena. This approach enables us to collect rich, contextual data and to understand the perceptions and experiences of the stakeholders involved.

2.2.2. Data collection

Three sources of data are utilised:

- Documentary analysis: this involves a review of the scientific literature (articles and books on the governance of public enterprises, on the DRC, and on the Ishikawa diagram), institutional reports (reports from the General Inspectorate of Finance, the Court of Auditors and the World Bank), and legal texts (laws, ordinances and decrees relating to the appointment of public representatives, and the RVA’s articles of association). Documents from the ILO (Convention No. 111, CEACR reports), the OECD (Guidelines on the Governance of Public Enterprises, 2024) and IPSAS standards are also analysed.

- Semi-structured interviews: these are conducted with key stakeholders: senior civil servants from the relevant ministries (Finance, Transport), former RVA directors, experts in public governance, trade union representatives, and inspectors. The aim is to gather their views on the causes of management instability and the consequences for the RVA.

- Indirect observation: this involves analysing cases of appointments and suspensions at the RVA between 2006 and 2026, drawing on press reports, official communications and archives. The focus is on recent events, notably the suspension of Ngoma Mbaki and the appointments in February 2026.

2.2.3. Sampling

A purposive sampling method is used. Respondents are selected for their in-depth knowledge of the appointment system and the RVA. We aim to conduct around fifteen interviews, spread across the various categories of stakeholders.

2.2.4. Data analysis

Data analysis follows three stages:

- Thematic content analysis of the interviews to identify recurring causes.

- Construction of an Ishikawa diagram: the causes identified are classified into the six categories (6M).

Each cause is prioritised according to its frequency of mention and its perceived impact.

- Gap analysis: systematic comparison of each identified cause against the requirements of international standards (ILO, OECD, IPSAS).

2.2.5. Limitations of the study

The main limitation is the sensitive nature of the subject, which may lead to self-censorship on the part of respondents. Information on appointments and dismissals is often opaque, making it difficult to access comprehensive data. The study focuses on analysing the causes, without quantitatively assessing their respective significance.

3. Results: Analysis of the causes of RVA (2006–2026)

3.1. The effect to be analysed: ineffective and unstable appointments

The central effect, which is the subject of the diagram, is formulated as follows:

➢ 'Ineffective and unstable appointment of RVA representatives (2006–2026)'

This effect manifests itself through several concrete symptoms:

- Rapid succession of leadership: representatives do not remain in post long enough to carry out structural reforms.

- Discretionary suspensions: representatives are suspended or dismissed without due process or prior assessment, as illustrated by the case of Ngoma Mbaki in 2025–2026.

- Prolonged interim appointments: interim appointments, such as that held by Louis Blaise Londole prior to his confirmation, create periods of uncertainty and paralysis in decision-making.

- Lack of strategic vision: instability in leadership prevents the formulation and implementation of long-term development plans.

- Deterioration of infrastructure: the lack of continuity in investment projects results in delays in the modernisation of airports.

3.2. Identification of causes by category (6M)

3.2.1. Method: the absence of formalised procedures

The 'Method' category refers to the processes, procedures and rules governing the appointment of directors. The causes identified are:

- Lack of clear competency standards: there is no standard profile defining the technical and managerial skills required for the posts of Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive or Chair of the Board at the RVA. Appointments are therefore not guided by objective criteria.

- Unformalised selection process: appointments are made by presidential decree, without a systematic call for applications or an independent selection committee. The process is opaque and discretionary. This practice is in flagrant contradiction with the requirements of the ILO, which advocates a broad and transparent call for applications, published in reputable international journals and newspapers, as well as online.

- Subjective and unpublished selection criteria: in the absence of objective criteria, appointment decisions are based on subjective judgements, often linked to political considerations. The OECD, however, requires that all directors be appointed on the basis of their qualifications in relation to the relevant sector of activity and corporate profile.

- Lack of terms of reference for incoming directors: new directors do not receive a letter of appointment or a contract setting out specific objectives. They do not know on what basis they will be assessed.

- Lack of a preliminary assessment procedure for candidates: candidates are not subject to skills tests, technical interviews or background checks. The ILO, however, requires a multidimensional assessment incorporating examinations, qualifications and professional experience.

- Lack of a handover process: transitions between representatives take place in a rush, without a handover audit, leading to a loss of institutional memory.

3.2.2. Workforce: the stakeholders and their behaviour

The 'Workforce' category refers to the stakeholders involved in the appointment process and their skills, motivations and behaviours.

At the level of policy-makers:

- Cronyism: appointments are often used to reward supporters, political allies or members of networks. Cronyism takes precedence over the search for competence. This practice directly violates ILO Convention No. 111, which requires selection based on competence and qualifications, without discrimination.

- Conflicts of interest: decision-makers may appoint relatives or individuals with whom they have business ties, without declaring these conflicts of interest. The OECD requires that mechanisms be put in place to prevent conflicts of interest that could prevent any director from performing their duties objectively.

- Tribal and regional favouritism: appointments may be influenced by ethnic or regional considerations, to the detriment of fairness and competence.

- Weak meritocracy: the system does not value merit. Being competent and of high integrity is not necessarily an asset when seeking a senior management position.

- Cultures of impunity: policy-makers know they will not be sanctioned for inappropriate appointments, which encourages them to pursue clientelist practices.

With regard to candidates and appointees:

- Lack of technical skills: many appointed officials lack the necessary skills in airport management, finance, strategy or regulation. They learn 'on the job', often with poor results.

- Weak culture of public ethics: some appointees view their position as an opportunity for personal gain rather than as a public service.

- Lack of preparatory training: appointees do not receive training programmes in public governance before taking up their posts.

- Lack of resilience in the face of political pressure: board members are vulnerable to pressure from the supervisory authority and requests for favours, which compromises their independence. The OECD emphasises the importance of limiting political interference in the functioning of the board of directors.

In terms of support services:

- Lack of qualified staff: line ministries lack competent managers to assess candidates and monitor the performance of appointees.

- Insufficient training: staff in support services are not trained in public sector recruitment and assessment methods.

- Low involvement in the processes: support services are often bypassed by policy-makers, who favour informal channels.

3.2.3. Context: the political, legal and social environment

The 'Environment' category refers to the context in which the appointment process takes place.

Political context:

- Significant political interference: appointments and dismissals at the RVA are political decisions, reflecting power struggles surrounding a strategic enterprise. The Head of State, ministers and political parties intervene directly in these decisions. The OECD, however, stipulates that political figures who are in a position to significantly influence the conditions under which state-owned enterprises operate should not sit on the boards of these enterprises.

- Political instability: changes in government or governing coalitions often lead to reshuffles at the top of state-owned enterprises, with no regard for management continuity.

- Pressure from ruling parties: political parties demand posts for their officials, which fuels clientelism.

- Politicisation of the civil service: the civil service is largely politicised, and appointments to state-owned enterprises follow this pattern.

Legal context:

- Outdated legal framework: the legislation governing the appointment of public officials sometimes dates back to the 1970s and 1980s and is no longer suited to current challenges.

- A multiplicity of laws: several laws, ordinances and decrees coexist, and are sometimes contradictory, creating legal confusion.

- Poor enforcement of legislation: even where legislation exists, it is not enforced. Procedures are circumvented.

- Lack of procedural safeguards: representatives are not afforded safeguards against arbitrary dismissal.

Social context:

- Community-based considerations: community expectations influence appointments, with each ethnic or regional group claiming its share of leadership positions.

- Social clientelism: appointments are sometimes used to satisfy social demands or defuse tensions.

- Low public scrutiny: the media and civil society pay little attention to appointments in public enterprises, which reduces the pressure for transparency. The OECD, however, requires the publication of the composition of the board of directors and the qualifications of its members.

- A culture of silence: informants or whistleblowers are rare, for fear of reprisals.

Economic context:

- Low pay: salaries in the public sector are often low, which encourages rent-seeking behaviour and the acceptance of ethical compromises.

- Limited resources: the state has limited financial resources to conduct transparent selection processes.

3.2.4. Material: tools and equipment

The 'Equipment' category refers to the technical tools used for skills management and appointments.

- Lack of centralised databases: there is no national register of qualified public sector managers, detailing their qualifications, experience and previous appraisals.

- Lack of modern talent management tools: ministries do not have information systems for the recruitment, assessment and monitoring of appointees.

- Lack of a digital application platform: candidates cannot apply online, which limits transparency and access to information.

- Lack of digitised records: records relating to past appointments (performance records, appraisal reports) are often scattered or non-existent.

- Outdated monitoring tools: the General Inspectorate of Finance and the Court of Auditors lack modern equipment to carry out effective audits.

3.2.5. Content: information and data

The 'Content' category refers to the information required for sound decision-making.

- Lack of reliable information: there is no precise data on the actual skills requirements of public enterprises.

- Outdated data: the information available on candidates or directors is often incomplete or out of date.

- Lack of transparency: appointment criteria, candidates' profiles and evaluations of directors are not published, in breach of the OECD's transparency requirements.

- Lack of review of previous terms of office: there is no systematic reporting on the performance of outgoing directors, which prevents lessons being learnt from past experiences.

- Lack of feedback: lessons learnt from failures or successes are not capitalised upon.

3.2.6. Measure: monitoring and evaluation

The 'Measurement' category refers to indicators, evaluations and monitoring.

- Lack of clear performance indicators: for RVA agents, there are no KPIs aligned with the agency's remit (safety, fees, infrastructure, training). The OECD, however, requires regular performance evaluation, and IPSAS mandates financial performance indicators to enhance transparency and accountability.

- Lack of periodic assessment: agents currently in office are not assessed regularly. Their performance is not measured objectively.

- Absence of a performance appraisal system: there is no assessment framework for appointees based on quantified objectives.

- Lack of ex ante and ex post controls: the IGF and the Court of Auditors are under-resourced and cannot carry out in-depth audits prior to appointments or following the end of terms of office. Yet IPSAS require accrual accounting and a comprehensive valuation of assets and liabilities.

4. Discussion

4.1. Interpretation of the results

The results confirm that the issue of appointing RVA representatives is multifactorial and systemic. The causes most frequently cited by respondents relate to the 'Environment' (political interference, clientelism) and the 'Method' (lack of a formalised process). This finding is consistent with the work of Mulenda (2022), who highlights the prevalence of the phenomenon of the 'politicisation' of appointments in the DRC.

The weakness of the measures (lack of indicators and controls) creates a vicious circle: representatives are not assessed, which, in the eyes of decision-makers, justifies the continuation of discretionary practices. The absence of objective assessment also makes any proportionate sanctions impossible, and suspensions appear to be arbitrary political decisions.

The incident at N'djili Airport in September 2025 perfectly illustrates the consequences of these failings. The failure of the inverter, caused by the decision to use a low-cost contractor for repairs, reveals a breakdown in the chain of responsibility: the technical director had raised the alarm, but his recommendation was ignored, probably for reasons of cost or favouritism. This episode shows that instability in management and the lack of a performance-oriented culture have tangible consequences for passenger safety.

4.2. Assessment of agents in relation to the RVA's remit

Management instability has direct consequences for the RVA's ability to fulfil its four core missions:

1. Ensuring safety and air navigation Disruption to maintenance and modernisation programmes for navigation equipment; lack of follow-up on safety audits; difficulty in maintaining international certifications (ICAO). The incident in September 2025 is a dramatic illustration of this. The ILO requires strong technical expertise for senior management roles[22]; the OECD requires qualified administrators with relevant sector-specific experience.

2. Collection of aviation and non-aviation charges Lack of consistency in collection policy; concession contracts (car parks, shops, etc.) signed in haste or renegotiated with every change of management; loss of revenue. IPSAS require accrual accounting and transparency regarding revenue collected. The OECD requires the publication of financial statements.

3. Developing existing airports and building new ones Infrastructure projects (such as N'djili Airport) stalled or delayed; lack of a multi-year strategic vision; difficulty in securing long-term funding. The OECD requires the board of directors to have a strategic vision and to take responsibility for results.

4. Providing ongoing training for staff Training budgets reduced or redefined with each term of office; lack of a long- -term skills development programme; brain drain. The ILO emphasises the importance of continuous training and skills development.

4.3. Discrepancies with international standards

The table below summarises the specific requirements of each regulatory framework and their application to the RVA:

Standard	Specific requirement	Practice at the RVA	Discrepancy
ILO	Selection based on skills and qualifications (Convention No. 111)	Appointments based on political patronage	Major discrepancy
ILO	Open and transparent call for applications	No call for applications; appointments by decree	Major discrepancy
ILO	Multidimensional assessment (exams, qualifications, experience)	No assessment of candidates	Major discrepancy
ILO	Distinction between technical and political roles	Direct political interference in appointments	Major discrepancy
OECD	Appointment of directors based on qualifications	Appointments based on political criteria	Major discrepancy
OECD	Independent board of directors, limiting political interference	Chronic political interference by the executive	Major discrepancy
OECD	The Board has the power to appoint and dismiss the Secretary-General	Power held by the executive (Presidency, ministries)	Major discrepancy
OECD	Regular, systematic performance evaluation	No evaluation; discretionary suspensions	Major discrepancy
OECD/IPSAS	Transparency: publication of the governance structure, remuneration and qualifications	Complete lack of transparency regarding appointments and remuneration	Major discrepancy
IPSAS	Accrual accounting; recognition of assets, liabilities, revenue and expenditure	Lack of rigorous accounting for royalties and assets	Major discrepancy
IPSAS	Production of comparable, transparent and audited financial statements	Unreliable or unpublished financial statements	Major discrepancy

4.4. The 2026 appointment as an illustration of the system

The presidential decrees of 23 February 2026, which confirm Louis Blaise Londole as Director-General and reappoint Tryphon Kin-Kiey Mulumba as Chair of the Board[5], follow a well-established pattern:

- Discretionary decision: taken by the Head of State, with no transparency regarding the criteria. The OECD, however, requires that the procedure for appointing directors be published[37].

- Internal mobility: Londole, previously acting Director-General, has been confirmed in his post, which suggests a policy of administrative continuity but does not follow an open selection process.

- Lack of public evaluation: Ngoma Mbaki's suspension is justified on the grounds of 'malfunction'[5], without the publication of an audit or a detailed evaluation report. The OECD, however, requires regular performance evaluations[33].

- Failure to comply with ILO standards: no competence-based selection procedure was followed, in breach of Convention No. 111.

This case is emblematic of a system in which actual performance and objective criteria are subordinated to political considerations. The incident at N'djili Airport[7] did not lead to a fundamental reform of the appointment processes, but merely to a reshuffling of personnel, thereby perpetuating the cycle of instability.

4.5. Issues and challenges in aligning with international standards

Alignment with international standards (ILO, OECD, IPSAS) faces several obstacles:

- Political obstacle: clientelist practices serve as a means of consolidating power. Policy-makers have every interest in maintaining a system that allows them to reward their supporters.

- Institutional obstacle: oversight bodies (IGF, Court of Auditors) lack resources and independence. The adoption of IPSAS, as demonstrated by the experiences of Nigeria and Kenya, requires significant investment in training and equipment.

- Cultural obstacle: the logic of community-based redistribution is deeply ingrained. Meritocracy, which lies at the heart of ILO and OECD standards[2028], clashes with long-standing social practices.

- Technical obstacle: the lack of data and tools (databases, information systems) hinders the implementation of meritocratic and transparent systems.

5. Conclusion

The issue of appointing RVA representatives between 2006 and 2026 highlights a systemic dysfunction. The causes are numerous and interlinked: the absence of formalised methods, clientelism and conflicts of interest, chronic political interference, a lack of tools and data, and the absence of objective assessment criteria.

This system creates instability that is detrimental to the fulfilment of the RVA's core missions: aviation safety, the collection of charges, airport development and staff training. The incident at N'djili Airport in September 2025 is a tragic illustration of this.

The gap between the RVA's practices and international standards is evident. The ILO requires recruitment based on merit and transparency. The OECD requires independent boards of directors, merit-based appointments, regular evaluations and full transparency. IPSAS requires accrual accounting and rigorous accountability. The RVA falls short on all these points.

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