



## **U. Desmond Alufohai** **Division Director, Protocol & International Affairs**



**U. Desmond Alufohai** was appointed **Director of Protocol & International Affairs Division**, Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD) in April 2019. The Office of Protocol and International Affairs Division was created in 1988 to facilitate the movement of diplomats, dignitaries, elected officials, and VIPs and to support the airport's international programs and initiatives. Miami International Airport (MIA) was the first airport in the U.S., one of the few major airports worldwide, to offer a full array of protocol services, including a diplomatic lounge. Mr. Alufohai leads the largest protocol office of any airport in the United States.

Before joining MDAD, he served as the Senior International Trade Coordinator and Head of the International Trade Programs for Miami-Dade County's Economic Development and International Trade Agency from 2003 until 2019. He previously served as Executive Director and Head of the Membership Services and Training Department for Junior Chamber International (JCI) and JCI's Senior Director for Growth and Development for Africa and the Middle East from 1991 - 2002.

Mr. Alufohai has worked as a leader in the international community for more than 35 years. He travels worldwide, conducting trade missions, workshops, organizational fieldwork, and essential professional development training. He has visited more than 90 countries and made notable contributions during his tenure at JCI as the liaison to the following organizations: United Nations Agencies (UNICEF & UNESCO), the World Health Organization [WHO]; and the African Union (AU). He was a delegate to the International Model United Nations (IMUN) in New York (1991).

As an International Trade Specialist, Mr. Alufohai leveraged extensive global travel and expertise to foster cross-border business connections, promote trade opportunities, and build strategic intergovernmental relationships. He facilitated business matchmaking, trade missions, and market expansion opportunities for businesses across diverse sectors, negotiated agreements, and advocated for policies that promote fair trade and reduce barriers.

He represented organizations and governments in international trade forums, fostering economic cooperation and advancing mutual interests while building and sustaining long-term relationships with key stakeholders, including government officials, diplomats, and business leaders. He also promoted sustainable trade practices, encouraging foreign investment, and contributing to global economic development initiatives. Through these

efforts, he helped strengthen economic ties, enhanced international collaboration, and contributed to the success of businesses and governments in the global marketplace.

Mr. Alufohai obtained a Bachelor of Science (BSc.) degree from the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree from Anna Maria University in Paxton, Massachusetts, USA. Additionally, he has acquired numerous professional certifications, recognitions, and accolades, including:

#### International Protocol, Etiquette, and Diplomacy

- Inducted into the International Academy of Ceremonial and Protocol (AICP) / Academia Internacional de Ceremonial y Protocolo (AICP) as a Corresponding Academician. The AICP was created under the name of International Academy of Protocol (IAP), on November 14, 2001, in the city of Palma de Mallorca, as an Autonomous Organism of the International Organization of Ceremonial and Protocol (IOCP) / Organización Internacional de Ceremonial Y Protocolo (OICP) – (2024)
- Graduate of the Protocol School of Washington® - Trained as an Intercultural Etiquette and Protocol Trainer in a comprehensive training course designed to train individuals to teach business etiquette, international protocol, and dining seminars - (2019)
- Active Member of the Protocol & Diplomacy International - Protocol Officers Association (PDI-POA), whose mission is to foster a global community of protocol and diplomacy professionals – (since 2018).

#### International Trade, Business, Travel & Tourism Development

- Serves as chairman of the Black Hospitality Initiative (BHI), Board of Directors. BHI is a not-for-profit organization within the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, working to encourage the equitable economic and increased workforce participation of African Americans and Blacks of African Descent in the Greater Miami visitor industry through Scholarship awards, Talent Development and Job Connection Programs – (2024 to present).
- Serves as Founding Chairman of the Florida International Affairs Foundation (FI AF) by the Florida Secretary of State. FI AF's mission is to supplement the programs and services of the Florida Department of State's Office of International Affairs (OIA) within the Division of Arts and Culture by fostering, creating, and enhancing diplomatic and cultural relationships and facilitating consular relations between the state and all foreign governments doing business in Florida (2021 to present).
- Designated member of *South Florida's District Export Council (DEC)* by the Honorable Wilbur Ross, United States Secretary of Commerce, to contribute leadership and business experience to support the nation's joint industry/government expansion effort. The South Florida District Export Council provides leadership and international trade expertise to complement the U.S. Commercial Service's export promotion efforts – (2021).

- Member, Florida Export Finance Corporation (FEFC) Board of Directors. The Florida Export Finance Corporation (FEFC) is a non-profit organization established by the state of Florida to help small and medium-sized businesses expand their global market reach – (2022).
- Certified Global Business Professional (CGBP) - the highest global educational designation, recognition, and credentials in all international trade and commerce fields. He also served on the Governing Council of - North American Small Business International Trade Educators (NASBITE) – 2015.
- Certified Meeting Professional [CMP] - the highest educational credentials recognized globally as the badge of excellence in the meeting, convention, exhibition, and event industry - (2014).
- Graduate of the Small Business Development Center’s (SBDC) *International Trade Certification Program*.
- Served on the Board of Directors of World Trade Center Miami and as chair of the Stakeholders & Community Engagement Committee.

He is an esteemed business and community leader:

- Recipient of the U.S. President’s Lifetime Achievement Award for Leadership and Voluntary Service [2025], - The honor was established by the executive order of President George W. Bush in 2003 to honor volunteers that give thousands of hours per year to helping others. Signed by President Joseph R. Biden, the award is a pinnacle in community service and is the highest honor given of its kind.
- Honored listee of *Who is Who in America* (2024-2025) - inclusion is limited to individuals who possess integrity, demonstrate outstanding achievement in their respective fields, and have made innumerable contributions to society.
- National President, Ora-Ekpen Association USA, Inc.
- Founding President, University of Benin Alumni Association of North America (UBAANA) Florida Chapter.
- Founding member, Mayors’ African Trade Task Force, Miami-Dade County, Florida.

He is the recipient of numerous awards and accolades:

- Honoree, Junior Chamber International (JCI) Nigeria, *Heroes Honor Award* [2024].
- Recipient of the Consular Corps of Miami, Florida “*2023 Person of the Year Award*” [2023].
- Recipient of the “*Miami Magnet Award*,” presented by the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau for immense contribution to the tourism, leisure, hospitality, meetings, and convention industry [2018].
- Inductee, *5000 Role Models of Excellence Project*, founded by Congresswoman Frederic S. Wilson [2016].
- South Florida’s *50 Most Powerful & Influential Black Professionals* in Business & Industry [2015].

- Awarded the Minority Enterprise Development “*International Trade Advocate of the Year*” [2015].
- *Distinguished Alumnus Award* – University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria [2014].
- Recipient of the prestigious *Nigerian American Foundation Heritage Award* [2011].
- Featured in the inaugural edition of “*Who’s Who in South Florida*” [2007].
- Miami-Dade Black Heritage *Community Pillars Award* [2004].
- Miami-Dade County coveted *Cultural Ambassador Award* [2003].
- Voted *Ten Most Outstanding Young Persons* (TOYP) of Nigeria [1998].

His peers and associates fondly call Mr. Alufohai “Mr. International” due to his extensive international travels and proficiency in global affairs, intercultural etiquette, protocol, and diplomacy. He was instrumental in establishing the Sister Cities engagement between Miami-Dade County and Dakar, Senegal, and Miami-Dade County and Cape Town, South Africa. He is an Adjunct Professor, International Training Fellow [ITF], management consultant, workshop facilitator, and consummate instructor.