

U. Desmond Alufohai

Division Director, Protocol & International Affairs



Mr. U. Desmond Alufohai is Division Director II of the Protocol & International Affairs Division at the Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD), overseeing the largest airport-based protocol operation in the United States. He leads the team responsible for managing the movement of diplomats, dignitaries, elected officials, and VIPs through Miami International Airport (MIA), the first U.S. airport to offer comprehensive protocol services, including a dedicated diplomatic lounge. Mr. Alufohai's leadership strengthens MIA's global engagement, elevates its international partnerships, and reinforces its role as a premier gateway for diplomacy and international relations.

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 served as Executive Director and Head of the Membership Services and Training Department for Junior Chamber International (JCI), and as JCI's Senior Director for Growth and Development for Africa and the Middle East, from 1991 to 2002.

Mr. Alufohai has worked as a leader in the international community for more than 35 years. He travels worldwide to conduct trade missions, workshops, and organizational fieldwork, as well as 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, 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, encouraged foreign investment, and contributed 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:

He is an esteemed business and community leader:

- Recipient of the **U.S. President's Lifetime Achievement Award** for Leadership and Voluntary Service [2025] - Signed by President Joseph R. Biden, the award is a pinnacle in community service and is the highest honor. The honor was established by President George W. Bush through an executive order in 2003 to recognize volunteers who give thousands of hours per year to helping others.
- Honored listee of **Who's 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.
- Serves as a member of the Board of Directors for the **Citizens for Florida Arts and Culture, Inc.**
- Serves as the chair of the **Annual Global Africa Symposium**

Business & Community Leadership, contd.

- **Serves as chairman** of the Board of Directors for the **Visitors Industry Council (VIC)**. VIC is a Miami-based nonprofit organization dedicated to expanding access to education and career opportunities in the hospitality and visitor industries. Its mission is to invest in students and emerging professionals by providing scholarship support, career exposure, and industry connections that build a stronger, more inclusive hospitality workforce for Greater Miami.
- Serves as Chairman of **Florida's Annual MEDWeek (Minority Enterprise Development) Business Matchmaker Opportunity Conference**
- Served as the Founding Chairman of the **Florida International Affairs Foundation (FIAF)**, appointed by the Florida Secretary of State (2021 to 2026).
- Served on the Board of Directors of **World Trade Center Miami** and chaired the Stakeholders & Community Engagement Committee.
- Founding President, **University of Benin Alumni Association of North America (UBAANA)**, Florida.
- Founding member, Mayors' **African Trade Task Force**, Miami-Dade County, Florida.

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.
- **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 Officer Association (PDI-POA)**, whose mission is to foster a global community of protocol and diplomacy professionals (since 2018).

International Trade, Business, Travel & Tourism Development

- **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.
- **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 the North American Small Business International Trade Educators (NASBITE) in 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 Small Business Development Center's (SBDC) **International Trade Certification Program.A**

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].

Awards and accolades, contd.:

- 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**” for his extensive international travels and proficiency in global affairs, intercultural etiquette, protocol, and diplomacy. He was instrumental in establishing the Sister Cities engagements between Miami-Dade County and Dakar, Senegal; Cape Town, South Africa; and the Casablanca-Settat Region of the Kingdom of Morocco. He is an Adjunct Professor, International Training Fellow [ITF], management consultant, workshop facilitator, and consummate instructor.