



transport

Department:
Transport
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Chairperson and Members of the Board of the Cross Border Road Transport Agency

Acting Director General of the Department of Transport Chief Executive Officer and Management team of the C-BRTA

Chief Executive Officers of Transport Entities Senior Officials from the Department of Transport

Other Senior Officials of Entities

Representatives of Provincial Governments

Representatives of the South African Revenue Services

Freight Operators and All Our Stakeholders in the Cross-Border Road Transport Industry

Members of the Media Present

Ladies and gentlemen

Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to be part of this occasion which affords me, the C-BRTA and the Department of Transport the opportunity to have an open engagement with the cross-border road transport freight operators. It is not every day that we get an opportunity like this to meet and interact in this manner.

This is very opportune as we have declared 2017 the year of Oliver Reginald Tambo, who stands out as an internationalist of note. It is through the efforts of OR Tambo and many legends of our struggle that South Africa was integrated into the rest of the African continent and the world.

Government is commemorating the centenary of OR Tambo, who this year would have turned 100 years. Oliver Tambo is the former President of the African National Congress, who, despite difficult times, ensured that he keeps our movement together. He did this for the benefit of all of us and the generations to come. If it was not for people like him, we probably would not be enjoying the kind of freedom, democracy and free economic trade that we have today.

With the inception of a democratic constitution, South Africans realised we could not develop our society and our economy in the absence of taking broadly transformative steps whose impacts must include regional socio-economic development. South Africa became a signatory to the SADC Protocol on Transport, Communications, and Meteorology in 1996 with the objective of harmonising transport policies, standards and practices, thus formalising this transformative and greatly continental perspective around clearly set regional goals.

As a result of this Protocol, South Africa entered into bilateral and multilateral road transport agreements with our counterparts in the region with a view to enable the movement of goods and passengers in the region.

The Developmental Aspects of the Agreements

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to acknowledge the role of transport in the economic development of South Africa and the rest of the continent.

Freight transport plays a critical role in ensuring and sustaining economic development. Without freight transport, goods will not be transported from the point of manufacturing to consumer markets. Without this service, our economy will be stagnant and economic growth will be a pipedream. Transport is therefore the heartbeat of our economy and the enabler of its growth.

Government established the Cross-Border Road Transport Agency to monitor the implementation of the agreements just mentioned with a view to improving the unimpeded flow by road of freight and passengers in the region, to liberalise market

access progressively in respect of cross-border freight road transport, and to reduce operational constraints for the cross-border road transport industry.

In addition, the Agency is expected to empower the cross-border road transport industry to maximise business opportunities that result from economic growth across the continent.

It is in this spirit that OR Tambo urged all of us to help remake our part of the world into a corner of the globe, which all of humanity can be proud of.

Thus the C-BRTA is expected encapsulate the developmental ideals of government in general and those of the Department of transport specifically through the implementation of road transport agreements together with our SADC counterparts to ensure that South African operators are afforded a treatment that is based on reciprocity, similar treatment and non-discrimination.

On this note, I wish to commend the Agency for the initiatives taken through the support of the Department to resolve many of the operational constraints through consultative structures and networks such as the Joint Route Management Groups, Joint Committees, Inter-border and other platforms. It is through these structures that we expect interaction between governments as represented by the C-BRTA, other organs of State and business, in this case, the cross-border operators.

Challenges Faced by Road Freight Operators

One cannot imagine an economic interaction between any two countries without cross-border road transport enabling that interaction. However there remains critical challenges to the development of a free trans-border freight-based economic activity.

Ladies and gentlemen, government is aware that the regulatory environment in the SADC region is not harmonised as envisaged in the SADC Protocol and road transport agreements. The freight transport industry is still faced with challenges such as the requirement to buy Third Party Insurance when they enter neighbouring countries

despite the fact that they are already covered by insurance purchased in South Africa. Through the persuasive efforts of the C-BRTA on this matter, Zambia is considering the establishment of the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund as part of resolving this challenge.

We also escalated this matter at the recent Binational Commission with our Zimbabwean counterparts where it was resolved that the Finance and Transport subcommittees of the Commission should jointly come up with a solution.

We are also aware of the challenge of non-recognition of South African vehicle standards by some of our neighbours where South African registered vehicles are expected to meet vehicle standards of these countries. There is commitment from the Zambian and Zimbabwean authorities to recognise our vehicles standards, and must ensure that the C-BRTA monitors adherence to these commitments and where need arises for these to be escalated to the ministry should there be a need for such intervention.

For many years we have been complaining about the bottlenecks, delays and random fees charged at the Container Depot, which is normally referred to as CONDEP in Zimbabwe. The Agency has been engaging with the Zimbabwean authorities on the matter and Zimbabwe has initiated an exercise in September 2016 to review and streamline processes and fees at CONDEP and on the Zimbabwean side of Beitbridge border post, the outcome of which will be communicated as soon as it is completed.

We are equally aware of our counterparts charging exorbitant cross-border fees that only apply to foreign registered vehicles. These fees constitute unnecessary constraints that increase operational costs to all our operators. The C-BRTA has considered and acceded to appeals by freight operators to reciprocate, not with view to be punitive, but to ensure standardisation, harmonisation and fair treatment.

To this end, the Agency has since conducted a study of all cross-border charges levied by our counterparts and developed a business case for Government to consider introducing similar charges as a way of equalising regulatory impacts across borders. A task team comprising of the Department of Transport and the C-BRTA has since been established to take the process forward.

It is clear that the challenges facing the industry cannot not be handled by the C-BRTA alone. We therefore wish to urge freight operators to cooperate and partner with the Agency to tackle the mammoth task of finding lasting solutions to these hindrances. We wish to encourage the Agency and business to hold hands and work together on matters of common interest.

Transformation of the Sector

Transformation is a key Constitutional imperative and the freight industry needs to be transformed to empower and include women, youth, and people with disabilities from groups of the historically disadvantaged. We should implore established freight operators to be proactive in empowering black-owned small, medium and micro enterprises by offering them business and mentoring opportunities in support of the vision of Oliver Reginald Tambo which he articulated in his Georgetown University speech on 27 January 1987 where he said and I quote; “...**we seek to create a united, democratic and non-racial society. We have a vision of South Africa in which black and white shall live and work together as equals in conditions of peace and prosperity...**”Unquote. The C-BRTA must thus ensure that the cross-border industry complies with BBBEE transport sector code.

Road Safety

Ladies and gentlemen, we need to tackle the safety, security and accessibility objectives of the agreements and how these connect with our aspirations of providing safe and secure transport systems and networks.

This is important given the increasing number of vehicles carrying drivers, passengers and freight across our borders as a consequence of the growth of economies across the continent.

South Africa is plagued by the scourge of road crash fatalities as a result of avoidable road accidents that nevertheless continue to rise in spite of tremendous efforts to save lives on our part.

The challenges persist largely due to non-adherence to the rules of the road by road users. It is the responsibility of all of us to improve safety on our roads. We therefore must appeal to all gathered here to make sure our vehicles are roadworthy, are not overloaded and that we manage the health and wellness of our drivers by ensuring that they take regular intervals to avoid fatigue.

The Agency is working on the Operator Compliance Accreditation Scheme, OCAS, which is an intelligent risk-based road safety tool for certifying and licensing compliant commercial road transport operators.

OCAS is founded on the basis of safety management systems as championed in the **United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety**. I urge you to support the Agency in developing this important tool aimed at addressing our road safety challenges.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we must announce our reappointment of Mr. Siphon Khumalo as the CEO of the Agency. This is to ensure that the Agency continues on the path of improving the unimpeded flow by road of freight and passengers in the region and reducing operational constraints for the cross-border road transport industry as a whole.

I acknowledge the challenges faced by all of us, and it is only through our collective effort that we can overcome them. The fact that more than 80% of freight is transported by road makes freight operators a key transport sector stakeholder. We should therefore be focusing on the task at hand for us to achieve the objectives of the National Development Plan, which is our vision towards 2030.

Let me close with the words of OR Tambo when he said “...**help us to remake our part of the world into a corner of the globe of which all of humanity can be proud...**”

Thank you.