Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for coming in for this update briefing.
With me is Ms. Poppy Khoza the head of SACCA, I also have Ms. Fundi Sithebe, the COO of ACSA. These two corporate leaders just finished briefing me on the issues and operations of air travel safety.

The airports across the country are maintaining the acceptable standards in terms of their On Time Performance after a slight drop on Wednesday this week.

Before I venture too far, let me take this opportunity of the October Month to recognize the female leaders in aviation business and encourage all women and girls to take up aviation as a field of business and career interest. We still need a lot of pilots, engineers, managers and thought leaders in transport.

On the onset let me explain who SACCA is, most of you may refer to SACCA as C.A.A. The mandate of the South Africa Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) is to administer civil aviation safety and security oversight in the Republic of South Africa, this in line with the Civil Aviation Act, 2009, and in accordance with the standards and recommended practices prescribed by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

The performance of regular aviation safety and security oversight of aircraft, airlines and aviation personnel, amongst others, is done by SACCA assisted by other agencies under my Ministry in order to fulfill this mandate.

The SACAA develops regulations that the industry – the airline operators is expected to comply with and in order to assist the industry to comply, the SACAA develops Technical Guidance Material that demonstrates how the industry can comply to prescribed regulations.

The development of Regulations in South Africa is a consultative process that includes members of the industry and the public prior to the Minister’s promulgation of the regulations.

The SACAA inspectorate conducts annual renewal inspections and surveillance audits on all operators to determine if operators comply applicable regulations. So the context of you receiving news that either SAA Express or CemAir is grounded is located in this mandate. The sky and flying business must be safe and out record of having safety in the skies must be jealously guarded by all of us.
Now here too was the execution of this mandate that the inspection at South African Airways Technical (SAAT) an approved Aircraft Maintenance Organization, revealed some safety concerns, as I mentioned in the media interview on the 22 October 2019 in Cape Town.

SAAT is itself an internationally rated business but our role as the department of Transport is to regulate and monitor.

SAAT services many airlines including those that compete with SAA and other international airlines that come to South Africa, its track record is blemish free in this aspect and our work is to assist but verify that they continue to make South Africa proud. When SAA made the pronouncements it did about certain concerns on parts used by SAAT, as regulator, SACCA was duty bound to act.

The inconsistencies found

The SACAA audit of SAAT resulted in 5 findings relating to non-compliances with the Civil Aviation Regulations. The SACAA sampled two aircraft belonging to Mango airlines and Comair.

Even though the SACAA accepted the Corrective Action Plan submitted by SAAT, two findings which may affect the entire fleet of the three airlines remained a cause for concern for the Regulator.

It is against this backdrop that the SACAA engaged with the affected airlines to solicit assurance that the rest of the fleet does not display the same deficiencies. The two findings related to the unqualified personnel releasing or signing off maintenance work and secondly, maintenance checks on flight data recorders and voice recorders that had not been done correctly.

Upon discovery of these non-compliances, the steps taken by the SACAA were to direct the aircraft maintenance organization, South African Airways Technical, and the relevant airlines, namely Mango, Comair and South African Airways, to conduct verification exercises on their fleet to ensure that in terms of these irregularities, their aircraft are indeed airworthy. The airlines were expected to provide written evidence of their findings.

The feedback received by the Regulator indicate that 25 SAA aircraft, 12 Comair aircraft and 7 Mango aircraft were affected.

The airlines cooperated with the Regulator and submitted evidence which the Regulator spent the rest of Tuesday and Wednesday evaluating this evidence. The SACAA is in the process of processing the evidence submitted by all the airlines to determine whether it is safe for the airlines to operate the aircraft.

South African Airways Technical, Mango, Comair and South African Airways responded by self-grounding the affected aircraft pending the assessment by the Regulator. A Question was asked in Cape Town whether South African skies remain safe, South Africa goes through the International Civil Aviation Organization’s Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme.
The responsibility of ensuring that countries apply comparable civil aviation standards is undertaken by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a specialized United Nations agency comprising 192 Member States. South Africa is one of the ICAO Member States and must therefore comply with the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) set by ICAO on safety and security.

Results of latest ICAO audit on South Africa

ICAO conducted its Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme Continuous Monitoring Approach audit on South Africa in May 2017.

The results reveal that South Africa’s Effective Implementation rating had increased from 83.83% in 2013 to the current 87.41%. This rating is significantly higher than the world average of 68.53%.

Most importantly, the final ICAO audit report indicates that South Africa did not attract a Significant Safety Concern (SSC) during the audit. The impact of a Significant Safety Concern on a country means that commercial operations will be affected negatively as international and regional airlines will not operate in a country with an SSC.

South Africa’s results indicated that South Africa’s sterling performance resulted in 100% performance in two key audit areas, i.e. Legislation and Organization. Our country also recorded 100% in the sub-field of Aviation Medicine. South Africa is currently number 39 globally and number 2 in Africa.

South Africa’s participation in global aviation platforms

South Africa participates in global aviation discussions and represents the country globally on a number of international aviation bodies.

Other than the many roles that South Africa fulfills, the Director of Civil Aviation, Ms. Poppy Khoza, was recently appointed as the second vice-president of ICAO Council at the agency’s 40th Assembly in Montreal, Canada, in September 2019.

The number of aircraft accidents can be used as one of the basic barometers that can indicate the presence or otherwise of the effective administration of civil aviation safety and security oversight in a country.

It is worth mentioning that by ensuring maximum compliance with civil aviation regulations, the SACAA has assisted South Africa to retain the impeccable zero (0%) fatal accident record in relation to airlines and other scheduled commercial operations. This exemplifies the high standard of aviation safety and security in this sector.

SACCA and ACSA together with ATNS are very important economic entities in our transport ecosystem. Their work largely relies on the tariff system where our consensus on user pay principle is best practiced.

In every flight ticket there are imbedded levies or tariffs that enable these important entities to function. Likewise other fees apply to operators and other users.
The same user pay principle as we know, has been frowned upon in another area of my focus, our roads. The roads that lead to the airport here are very important for the smooth functioning of the economy and for our social need as a people.

Across our system, we have found that the user pay principle is direct, targeted, fairer and extremely efficient.

SACCA, and all the entities at the airport make us a world-class country with laws that are internationally accepted. The same should apply on our roads and on our ocean.

We need a world-class economy that is able to afford to have such needed services – but we must also agree to pay for that or else we are destroying rather than building.

The issues of corruption in the transport ecosystem must be confronted so that people continue to feel safe and are safe but also people must feel proud that they are contributing to building the future and building their own country – corruption robs us of that pride hence the resistance we have seen especially on the roads infrastructure.

Communicating with you this way is also a very important matter – letting South Africans know of SACCA is key to understanding why they may be late because the airline cancelled a plan due to a technical fault. That cancellation is between your life as a passenger or death. We do it to keep you safe, not to inconvenience you.

The lack of proper communications on the roads tariffs, the e-tolls for instance may have played a role in the slow take up by our road users. We must correct that and this is a start.

Our roads are congested. Our environment is highly polluted by our cars. We must reduce the amount of cars on the road and build world-class roads that cause efficiency on cars so as to emit less pollutants. Public Transport must be a key solution in all of that together with tolls and other measures.

I thought I should use this opportunity to encourage the users to support these entities and be aware that they only act for your best interest, their our unsung heroes who keep us safe and get us home to our loved ones, to do that, we pay.

I want to emphasize that there is no crisis, this work is routine and normal of SACCA to ground aircrafts or issue prohibition orders, we should not be overly concerned when this happens. They are doing what they were created to do and we must support them in their work.