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## Media Statement

**DATE:** Thursday, 27 February 2025

**TO:** All Media

**ATTENTION:** News Editors / Transport Reporters / All Reporters

**For immediate use**

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### **Minister Creecy Outlines the Selection Process followed in Recommending the Appointment of Prof John Lamola as GCEO of SAA to Cabinet.**

**CAPE TOWN:** The Minister of Transport, Ms Barbara Creecy, has congratulated Prof John Lamola on his appointment as Group Chief Executive Officer (GCEO) of South African Airways (SAA), as approved by Cabinet on Wednesday, the 26th of February 2025.

With regards to the selection process followed on this appointment, the Minister has said that she was delegated as the shareholder Minister of SAA at the end of August 2024. In September 2024, she was briefed by the SAA Board Chairperson, Mr Derek Hanekom, that a recruitment process was underway for the appointment of the GCEO of SAA.

“After that I received formal communication from the SAA Board Chairperson informing me of three appointable candidates for this position, requesting for my approval of one of the candidates.”, said Creecy.

In terms of the selection process, the candidates were ranked in order of the score that the selection panel had allocated to them as a result of their performance in both the interviews and the competency tests.

It must be pointed out that the first recommended candidate was the CEO of one of the airlines that operates in the African continent, who was not a South African citizen. The current acting CEO, Prof Lamola, was also one of the candidates recommended as appointable.

At that time, the Minister further communicated with the SAA Board chair and listened to his views on the relative merits of these two candidates.

She did express to him her concerns regarding the potential complexities in appointing a candidate who was not a South African citizen. This is related to a

previous experience she had in the transport portfolio where a CEO of an entity had failed to receive a maximum-security clearance based on the fact that he held a passport of another country.

“At that time, the SAA Board Chairperson advised me that all candidates were appointable and the shareholder should approve the most appropriate candidate for appointment having taken all factors into consideration.

Following careful consideration and taking all relevant factors into account the process was narrowed down to two candidates both of whom had the experience and qualities needed for this position. I then approached the President for advice on how to take the process further.”

Considering the importance of SAA as a State-Owned Entity, the sensitivity of potentially appointing a non-South African citizen in the CEO role, President Ramaphosa advised that I, together with the Deputy President meet with the two Board recommended candidates, to make a final determination on the most appropriate candidate for the role.” said Creecy.

This was to support both the Board and the Shareholder to conclude the process and bring stability to SAA and did not constitute any form of interference.

It must be further stated categorically that these interviews were a government process conducted by the Deputy President, and the Minister of Transport in their respective government capacities to enable the shareholder Minister to take to cabinet the most suitable candidate for GCEO of SAA.

“As a member of the Cabinet I deeply support the objective of building a strong, capable and ethical public service. In all portfolios where I have served, I have endeavored to appoint qualified, capable South Africans with integrity, and believe that my track record in this regard speaks for itself.

I take this opportunity to express my deep regret for that personal information of candidates was leaked and published in the public domain. No professional person should have to read their confidential information in the public domain.”, said Creecy.

Following the interviews, the Deputy President and the Minister of Transport agreed that both were strong candidates. After much deliberations, they agreed that taking all factors into consideration, Prof Lamola was the most appropriate candidate to best promote financial stability and the future growth of SAA.

Over the past two years, Prof Lamola, in his capacity as acting CEO, has steered SAA to conclude three years of outstanding audits and in the 2023 financial year to declare profits after many years of not doing so.

In addition, under his leadership, the entity has expanded to fly domestic, regional, and international routes.

Creecy has taken the opportunity to thank Prof John Lamola for the hard work and dedication that has led to these results and wish him every success in his role as GCEO of SAA.

**Issued by National Department of Transport.**

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