



TRANSPORT MINISTRY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**CLOSING ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, MS
BARBARA CREECY, AT THE NATIONAL AVIATION CONFERENCE
06 MAY 2026**

Distinguished delegates;

Members of the South African Civil Aviation Authority Board led by
Chairperson Adv. Mpati Lebakeng;

Director of Civil Aviation, Ms Poppy Khoza;

Directors-General of other African Civil Aviation Authorities

Captains of Industry;

Aviation Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

Let me begin by thanking the South African Civil Aviation Authority for
convening this conference, and for creating a platform that brings together
the full breadth our aviation sector.

Over the past two days there have been serious and necessary
conversations focussing on both emerging and established topics for the
aviation system.

Aviation requires effective governance and leadership that acts timeously and decisively on known risks, and the recent ICAO audit outcomes confirm that South Africa is meeting international standards at a high level.

Allow me to take a moment to congratulate you on the recent outcomes of the International Civil Aviation Organization Coordinated Validation, which achieved 95.12% in the preliminary results, ranking South Africa seventh in global aviation safety oversight. This makes us proud, and encourages us to ever improve our professionalism, performance of strategic objectives and sound governance.

The responsibility now is to sustain and continuously strengthen this performance. We must ensure that our regulatory framework remains responsive, that compliance is consistently enforced, and that the integrity of the aviation system is protected over time.

South Africa continues to maintain an exceptional safety record in commercial aviation, with zero fatal accidents recorded over more than four decades of scheduled airline operations. This is a significant achievement, one that reflects strong oversight, disciplined operations, and a deeply embedded safety culture across the sector.

Our responsibility now is to ensure that this same level of discipline, consistency and culture of safety continues to take root across all segments of the aviation sector.

While there has been some improvement in overall frequency over time, 76 accidents were recorded in the general aviation sector in the 2025/26

financial year when compared to 133 and 114 that were reported in 2024/25 and 2023/24 financial years respectively.

While I commend the efforts from both industry and the Regulator through the General Aviation Safety Strategy campaign, there remains a need to strengthen safety management, improve compliance and reinforce operational discipline within this segment of the industry.

I support the SACAA initiative of developing a Safety Hub that will be hosted on the website with tools to ease communication and consultation between industry and the Regulator.

Aviation on the African continent is set to increase exponentially over the next 20 years.

The Department of Transport and its entities continue to play a critical role in advancing these priorities by adopting modern technologies to increase operational efficiencies in the movement of people and goods and investing in transport infrastructure that enables economic growth.

As part of this effort, we have set clear targets towards 2030, namely 30 million passenger journeys and 1.2 million tons of air-freight through the ACSA network of airports.

These targets are not isolated commitments. They reflect a broader, coordinated effort to position transport as a key enabler of South Africa's economic recovery and long-term growth.

I am encouraged by the progress being made at Air Traffic and Navigation

Services, reflected in recent operational trends across our major airports. We have seen promising growth in air traffic movements, with King Shaka International Airport recording an increase of 8.12%, followed by 4.78% at O.R Tambo International Airport.

This upward trend is being matched by continued investment in infrastructure. Airports Company South Africa is set to invest R21.7 billion over the next five years to upgrade these key airports, which is a clear signal of confidence in the continued recovery and long-term growth of the country's aviation sector.

Colleagues, while we speak about innovation and the future of aviation, we must remain grounded in the core responsibility of this sector - ensuring both safety and security across the system.

Recent aviation security incidents at OR Tambo International Airport and other points of entry have highlighted the evolving risks facing aviation security. These incidents point to increasingly sophisticated criminal networks seeking to exploit international air routes.

We need more effective screening processes, closer coordination and a system-wide approach to safeguarding the integrity of our aviation environment. Aviation safety and security are interdependent, and both are essential to maintain public confidence in the system.

While we remain committed to innovation as a reflection of society's advancement, we must equally commit to effective regulation of all new technologies for standardisation, safety and security, collaborate more

effectively with our regional counterparts for harmonisation of standards and support technical cooperation across the region.

This technological journey for South Africa began as early as 2015, when regulations for Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems were promulgated, placing South Africa among the first countries globally to regulate drone usage.

The recent National Transport Conference also discussed global trends towards sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs), especially important given the growing global commitment towards SAFs in line with environmental sustainability requirements to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 in line with ICAO's Long-Term Aspirational Goal.

ICAO has greatly assisted South Africa through developing a Business Implementation study on the development of Sustainable Aviation Fuels. This study focuses on using domestic sugar as a fuel source, it also looks at the feasibility of using the Mossel Bay refinery for production.

The draft study has been well received by my counterparts in Agriculture and Minerals and Petroleum Resources, and we hope that this is a discussion the DCA and her team takes forward with technical counterparts in government and to collaborate with industry for effective implementation.

As I conclude, Aviation Colleagues, performance in aviation is not the responsibility of a single institution. It rests with all of us. It rests with the regulator, operators and with every individual responsible for safety, compliance, and decision-making.

South Africa must continue to contribute towards strengthening aviation across the African continent, and continue to innovate whilst ensuring that safety is never compromised.

We must act now and do so in a manner that strengthens the system as a whole because in aviation, the margin for error is small and the cost of inaction is high. Let us move forward with clarity, discipline, and a shared commitment to maintaining a system that continues to perform at the standard expected of it.

I thank you.