



**TRANSPORT MINISTRY  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT, ADV.  
JAMES MLAWU ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT MS BARBARA CREECY  
AT THE AIRPORTS COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, JOHANNESBURG, 19  
SEPTEMBER 2024**

Programme Director,

The President of ACI Africa

The Director General of ACI World

The Chief Executive Officer of Airports Company South Africa,

Captains of Industry,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning!

It is a great honour to address you at this year's ACI Africa Annual General Assembly, Regional Conference, Exhibition, and Airshow on behalf of our Minister of Transport, Ms Barbara Creecy. She sends a very warm welcome to all delegates present here over the duration of this conference and she has wished us well in our deliberations.

Today, I would like to touch on several key themes crucial to our discussions about how the aviation industry can drive socio-economic development across Africa, particularly as regards collaboration, innovation and knowledge sharing.

Ladies and gentlemen, just earlier this week, the Minister of Transport welcomed distinguished delegates at several African continental and regional conferences on transport including the Southern African Transport Conference, SATC, the Southern African Rail Association (SARA) conference.

Throughout the engagements the Minister emphasised the benefits of cooperation across the continent, with last being the Aviation Africa Summit, where she emphasised the importance of cooperation across the African continent on matters of aviation sector development.

At the Aviation Africa Summit, she had remarked that “by strengthening co-operation among African nations, we can enhance our collective air transport network, improve connectivity, and support greater regional trade and tourism”, unquote.

She continued by saying that, and I quote “We must work together to harmonize regulations, standardize procedures, and foster greater collaboration between our aviation authorities. This will not only streamline operations but also create a more cohesive and efficient aviation ecosystem across the continent”, unquote.

This conference has provided us with the unique opportunity to respond to the imperative to shape the future of African aviation, ensuring that our industry remains resilient, innovative and forward-thinking and has offered a comprehensive programme that covered everything from sustainability and digital transformation to safety and security, allowing for the sharing of invaluable knowledge and experiences.

The aviation sector is of paramount importance as it serves as a critical enabler of greater connectivity, trade, tourism, creating jobs, enabling investments, growing the economy and enhancing socio-economic development.

In many parts of Africa, aviation is the lifeline that connects remote regions to the rest of the world, fostering inclusive growth and development. By investing in our aviation infrastructure and services, we can unlock new economic opportunities and improve the quality of life for millions of people.

In South Africa, the aviation industry has proven itself to be a significant contributor to the national economy. It supports thousands of jobs, both directly and indirectly, and generates substantial revenue through tourism and trade, with our major airports facilitating the movement of goods and people, connecting South Africa to global markets and fostering international business relationships.

By improving air connectivity across the continent, we can reduce travel times, lower transportation costs and increase access to markets. This is particularly important for landlocked countries and remote regions, where aviation provides a vital link to the rest of the world.

Enhanced connectivity supports the growth of tourism, which is a major source of income and employment for many African countries due to Africa's rich cultural heritage, stunning landscapes and diverse wildlife, contributing to the continent's economic prosperity.

Better connectivity is also key for business expansion of markets, provides a critical link for humanitarian aid and disaster relief, and supports a wide range of ancillary services that benefit the broader economy. Improvement of airfreight is especially important for global competitiveness through timely delivery of perishable goods, high-value products, and time-sensitive shipments with spinoffs for agriculture, manufacturing and technology.

Moreover, the aviation sector plays a crucial role in facilitating regional integration and by improving air links between African countries, we can promote intra-African trade, strengthen regional cooperation and support the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

However, the social impact of the aviation sector extends to a crucial role of contributing to improvement of the quality of life for millions of people by providing access to education,

healthcare, including the rapid deployment of aid and relief in times of crisis, while bridging the gap between urban and rural areas and promoting inclusive development.

Collaboration is the cornerstone of progress in the aviation sector. By fostering strong partnerships between the public and private sectors, as well as engaging in international collaborations, we can address the challenges facing our industry; share solutions that enhance operational efficiency, improve safety and ensure sustainability.

Public-private partnerships are particularly crucial in this regard as governments can provide the policy and regulatory framework and the support needed to foster growth, while private enterprises bring in the innovation, investment and expertise required to drive the industry forward, ensuring long-term sustainability of our aviation sector.

International partnerships also play a vital role in our success through the transmission of best practice, sharing experiences, and leveraging the sharing of new technologies. These partnerships therefore enable us to stay competitive in the global market.

I think that it is also very important to acknowledge that airport management companies, including our very own Airports Company South Africa (ACSA), play a pivotal role in regional development. These organisations are not only responsible for the efficient operation of airports but also for driving economic growth and development in the regions they serve.

Moreover, airport management companies are key players in fostering regional connectivity. By developing and maintaining a network of well-connected airports, they facilitate the movement of people and goods across the continent towards the benefits of connectivity mentioned earlier.

Airport management companies also contribute to socio-economic development by creating jobs and supporting local communities. From construction and maintenance to retail and hospitality, airports generate employment opportunities for thousands of people.

I believe that it would be fair to say that aviation in Africa is at a pivotal juncture, with the continent experiencing rapid growth in air traffic, driven by economic development, a

growing middle class and increased connectivity. We must, however, also be cognisant that we face significant challenges that must be addressed to fully realise this potential.

As South Africa, our support for the aviation industry is aligned with our broader growth initiatives, which aim to create a more inclusive and prosperous economy. We are thus dedicated to creating an enabling environment for the aviation sector to thrive. This includes investing in infrastructure, implementing supportive policies, building partnerships and fostering innovation.

The next decade will be transformative, with significant advancements in technology, infrastructure, and sustainability shaping the landscape of African aviation, where new technologies will be a key driver of growth in the aviation sector.

Innovations such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics and the Internet of Things (IoT) are set to revolutionise airport operations, enhancing efficiency and improving the passenger experience.

Furthermore, the development of sustainable aviation fuels and electric aircraft will play a crucial role in reducing the environmental impact of aviation. By investing in green technologies, we can ensure that the growth of our industry is aligned with our commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship.

We must ensure that our airports are equipped to handle larger volumes of passengers and cargo as volumes of air travellers increase in the continent. Sustainability also includes investing in sustainable aviation fuels, promoting energy-efficient airport operations and supporting initiatives that offset carbon emissions. By prioritising sustainability, we can ensure that the growth of our aviation sector is both responsible and resilient.

But we cannot ignore the fact that the future of aviation in Africa also depends on the development of human capital. By investing in education and training programs, we can equip the next generation of aviation professionals with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.

This includes pilots, air traffic controllers, engineers and airport management personnel. By fostering a skilled workforce, we can ensure that our industry remains competitive and capable of meeting the challenges of the future.

So, the future of African aviation is bright. As long as we put the right strategies and partnerships in place, we can overcome the challenges we face and unlock the full potential of our industry.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the sponsors, stakeholders and organisers who have made this conference possible through your support and commitment, essential for driving the development of the aviation sector and for your valued contributions that have helped us to push the boundaries.

Last, but not least, I would like to take this opportunity to extend a word of thanks to ACSA for hosting this conference and for its unwavering commitment to driving the growth and development of the aviation sector in South Africa and across Africa.

Let us commit to working together, sharing our knowledge and expertise, and investing in the future of African aviation. By working together, we can build a stronger, more connected and more prosperous Africa.

I thank you.