



**MINISTRY
TRANSPORT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**KEYNOTE REMARKS FROM THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, MS
BARBARA CREECY, AT THE ICAO NEXT GENERATION OF
AVIATION PROFESSIONALS (NGAP) SUMMIT 2025 HELD IN
DURBAN, KWAZULU-NATAL**

ICAO Secretary-General, Mr Juan Carlos Salazar.

AFCAC Secretary-General, Ms Adefunke Adeyemi;

Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers from Member States here present;

Member of the Executive Council responsible for Transport in the KwaZulu Natal Province, Mr Siboniso Duma;

The SACAA Board led by the Chairperson, Mr Ernest Khosa,

Director of Civil Aviation from South African Civil Aviation Authority - Ms Poppy Khoza;

Members of the ICAO Council and Members of the ICAO Secretariat;

Our Young Aviation Professionals;

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen.

It is with deep pride and great honour that I welcome you all to our country on behalf of His Excellency the President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa. On your behalf I also thank the leadership of Kwa Zulu Natal for hosting us in the beautiful and warm City of eThekweni.

To all our distinguished partners from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Your leadership in guiding the global aviation community has been invaluable, and we are honoured to host this important summit in Africa for the first time.

Allow me also to recognise the contributions of the ministers and delegates from across Africa and beyond. Your collective expertise and shared commitment to the development of aviation are what will drive the success of our work over the next few days and in the years to come.

As we gather here as representatives of government, aviation organisations, industry leaders, and young professionals, we are presented with an important opportunity. We can shape the future of the aviation industry and make meaningful investments in the future of our youth

Ladies and gentlemen,

Ensuring inclusive growth and job creation is the apex priority of President Ramaphosa's Seventh Administration.

The aviation sector is a critical economic engine, a connector of nations, and an essential driver of growth. According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), in South Africa in 2023, air transport contributed approximately USD 5.7 billion, or (around R105.4 billion) one and a half percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2023—equivalent to 1.5% of total GDP, supporting 46 000 jobs, 27 000 of whom are licensed aviation professionals.

ICAO forecasts a global demand for over two million qualified aviation personnel by 2030. Through the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) can exponentially enhance job creation and growth on the African continent.

In recognition of the key role aviation can play in economic development, the Department of Transport targets to reach 42 million passengers and 1.2million tons of air-freight through the ACSA network of airports by 2029.

This will be achieved by increasing the capacity and upgrading of existing airports and aviation facilities, creating new cargo terminals, streamlining airport services and the flow of passengers, and expanding the network of ACSA airports to ensure greater aviation capacity and connectivity throughout South Africa and the broader southern African region.

However, while the sector offers substantial opportunities, these will not materialise unless we address one fundamental challenge—the need for a new generation of skilled professionals. As seasoned aviation workers retire and the demand for a skilled workforce grows, we must ensure that young people, especially across Africa, are equipped and prepared to step into these roles.

We know that, to create a sustainable future for the aviation industry, we must invest in the youth, creating real pathways for them to build careers in aviation—pathways that are inclusive, accessible, and supported by strong educational frameworks, financial resources and mentorship initiatives.

Here in South Africa, through the Civil Aviation Authority's Career Awareness Programme, the Regulator visits the length and breadth of this country to encourage school learners to consider Aviation as a future career.

As we all know, the barriers to accessing aviation training can be unaffordable to youth in developing countries such as our own. Funding for training future aviation professionals is key to the growth and sustainability of the aviation industry.

The South African Civil Aviation Authority, Airports Company South Africa and the Air Traffic Navigations Services have significant programmes to support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter professions such as pilots, aircraft maintenance technicians, aeronautical engineers, airport management and development, as well as flight procedure designers, air traffic controllers and related fields.

Support includes structured training programmes; internships, bursaries and learnerships. In our system there is a strong focus on promoting gender equity in professions which were previously male dominated.

These programmes represent a deliberate and sustained effort by South African aviation entities to empower a new generation of aviation professionals who reflect the demographic diversity of our country. Through these initiatives, our State is ensuring that access to critical skills and opportunities is broadened, particularly for young black South Africans and women, in line with our national transformation agenda.

It gives me hope to know and witness that civil aviation is not alone on this journey. we must pay homage to the South African Air Force (SAAF) and SAPS Air Wing who have continued to demonstrate the impact of aviation in public service.

We also recognise the SAA Cadet Pilot Programme, the Denel Technical Academy, Armscor, and SAAB have all played pivotal roles in nurturing critical aviation and engineering skills in our country.

The contribution of the Transport Education Training Authority, through ongoing funding support, cannot be overstated - without financial backing, potential often remains unrealised.

We also acknowledge the impact that Fly Safair and Airlink have made by partnering with the Regulator to absorb trainees, and providing on-the-job training, experience and flying hours. I cannot over emphasise the importance of partnerships between the private sector and government in developing talent and ensuring a thriving aviation Industry.

The non-profit sector also deserves mention and I would like to highlight amongst others like Sakhikamva Foundation, Aviation Development Africa, The Children's Flight, and Girl Fly Programme in Africa.

Because aviation is a constantly evolving field, higher education institutions such as universities, private education colleges and institutions are crucial for continuous research, learning and professional development in this dynamic and challenging field.

In South Africa there are ongoing discussions with institutions of higher learning to ensure universities understand the challenges and what role they can play in

developing the Next Generation of Aviation Professionals. This collaboration has been made possible by the willing engagement of the National Department of Higher Education.

Ladies and gentlemen, we know that our efforts alone as South Africans, are not enough. Workforce and skills development challenges are global, and collaboration is essential. That is why South Africa is also an active member of the Global Aviation and Aerospace Skills Taskforce (GAAST)—a growing international coalition bringing together States, regulators, and industry leaders to address global skills shortages and ensure workforce resilience.

The taskforce, which works closely with ICAO's Next Generation of Aviation Professionals programme, aims to build a repository of best practice, support diversity and inclusion, and ensure that talent development keeps pace with new technologies, safety requirements, and decarbonisation.

South Africa joins countries such as Brazil, Japan, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States on the taskforce steering group, along with international partners like ICAO, IATA, and the International Labour Organization. Together, we are shaping global solutions—from workstream strategies to upcoming resolutions expected at the ICAO Assembly.

Since 2003 when we were first elected, South Africa has contributed to a number of working groups and panels offered by various ICAO platforms. South Africa also plays a leading role in our Southern African region through the 'No Country left Behind' initiative, and through the Regional Cooperation Strategy that has been in motion for more than a decade now. We must ensure that we foster stronger cooperation and collaboration in order to grow this sector of our global economy. We must ensure that growth is balanced with adequate skills.

We are particularly excited about strengthening collaboration with our African counterparts—to share knowledge, build regional solutions, and shape a more united and competitive aviation sector for our continent.

In our many efforts to improve accessibility, we have signed Memoranda of Cooperation with a number of Aviation Authorities beyond our borders, these include the French Aviation Authority (DGAC), Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), amongst others.

As I conclude today, let me say that we are all looking forward to the 42nd session of the ICAO General Assembly in Montreal, Canada in September. South Africa and seven other African Member States will stand to be re-elected to the ICAO General Assembly, where we hope to continue to have a voice on global aviation safety, security, environment and sustainability matters.

Our continent has benefitted through the ICAO harmonised safety standards, and we see this with 28 of the 54 African Member States recording a safety oversight systems rating of 60% and above. It is an upward trajectory for our continent as one of the world's fastest growing air transport markets.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the next three days are pivotal. The decisions we make here today will not just define the future of aviation but will also shape the careers and futures of the young people in this room, and across the globe. Let us engage in conversations that lead to real, actionable outcomes—outcomes that will open doors to new careers, new technologies, and new opportunities for youth across the globe.

The youth are ready. Now it is time to ensure they have the tools, support, and opportunities to build the future of aviation.

I hereby officially open the 2025 ICAO Next Generation of Aviation Professionals Summit

Thank you.