



MEDIA RELEASE

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WANTED: YOUNG PEOPLE TO JOIN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY

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For immediate release

Midrand - Aviation experts have been sounding alarm bells about an eminent global shortage of skills in the aviation industry for some time. Regrettably, the shortage of highly skilled aviation personnel is no longer a looming challenge but a stark reality, faced by many countries worldwide. As a result, South Africa and most other developing countries have become a hunting ground for well-heeled employers. So says Captain Colin Jordaan, Commissioner for Civil Aviation and Chief Executive Officer of the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA).

“The current global demand for experienced pilots, engineers, air traffic controllers and maintenance and aerodrome technicians, among others, requires an immediate intervention as it is usually a lengthy process to identify and train candidates for most of these trades.

“Although the current economic downturn might offer some respite, the rate at which many of our country’s highly skilled and experienced personnel are lured toward more lucrative jobs elsewhere in the world is alarming. It will not be long before our aviation industry feels the same effects that befell the medical and engineering industry not so long ago. Besides, the number of young South Africans entering our aviation industry is being rapidly surpassed by local and global demand,” explains Capt. Jordaan.

While acknowledging that there are indeed challenges, conversely, Capt. Jordaan points out that through its unrelenting support and surveillance of the industry, the SACAA is of the opinion that the current national pool of skills and capacity is adequate to guarantee acceptable levels of safety.

According to Capt. Jordaan, a total of 5146 pilot's licences were issued by the SACAA between 1 March 2007 and 29 February 2008. “This represents a 13% increase in the number of licences issued compared to the same period the year before, but there has been a 5,5% decline over the same period 2008 to 2009. There was a sharp increase of 81% in the number of the student pilot’s licences issued in the 2007/2008 period compared to the previous 12 months, and this has grown by a further 5 % in the

2008/2009 period, which may be a result of the newly introduced Regulation (Part 61) which allows individuals as young as 16 years to obtain a student pilot's licence, provided they fulfil all the requirements," he says.

In devising additional attempts to help develop the highly sought-after skills in the industry, SACAA is mooting several initiatives with key stakeholders. Some of the impending projects include a scheme to providing upgrade training to pilots as well as the joint African Aviation Training Initiative which is aimed at training *ab-initio* pilots and technicians.

"However, all of these efforts will not yield any positive results if the youth of this country do not show any interest in what I can certainly describe as a truly dynamic industry. If ever there was a point when South Africa needed the services of its youth, that time is now!" concludes Capt. Jordaan.

-ENDS-

About the CAA:

The South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) was established on 1 October 1998 following the enactment of the South African Civil Aviation Authority Act, No.40, in September of the same year. The SACAA promotes and maintains a safe, secure and sustainable civil aviation environment, by regulating and overseeing the functioning and development of the industry in an efficient, cost-effective, and customer-friendly manner according to international standards.

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