

MEDIA STATEMENT

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South Africa assumes key role in United Nation's aviation agency

Midrand. South Africa has been appointed as the Chairperson of the International Civil Aviation Organisation's Aviation Security Panel. The appointment comes just months after the United States and the European Union have given their thumbs up to South Africa's aviation regulatory system on aviation and air cargo security.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is a specialised agency of the United Nations tasked with working with Member States and global aviation organisations to develop Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) which States must effect when developing their legally-enforceable national civil aviation regulations. In addition, ICAO regularly conducts audits among Member States in order to help identify aviation security shortcomings, and subsequently discusses methods to assist States in resolving deficiencies by implementing globally accepted security Standards and Recommended Practices.

The announcement was made at the recent ICAO Aviation Security Panel meeting held at the agency's headquarters in Montreal, Canada. The country will be represented by the Director of the South African Civil Aviation Authority, Ms Poppy Khoza, making her the first woman to take up the position. Prior to the appointment, South Africa served as the Panel's Deputy Chairperson for two consecutive terms.

ICAO's Aviation Security Panel is tasked with enhancing civil aviation security across the world by, among others, developing and coordinating an effective global policy and legal framework in response to the evolving threat to civil aviation. It also sets global aviation security standards, which are then approved by the ICAO Council, in order to safeguard civil aviation operations against issues related to terrorism and any matter threatening aviation operations. As the Panel conducts its business it gives consideration to economic, operational and other impacts in civil aviation and provides advice on strategic direction on aviation security matters. The Panel also identifies and examines new and emerging threats and develops appropriate mitigating measures. Through close collaboration with other agencies, the Panel also coordinates counter measures against threats to civil aviation operations. During meetings, the Panel also discusses civil aviation incidents as and when they happen, for instance the 9/11, and the French Alps tragedies.

Commenting on the appointment, Ms Khoza said, “The appointment is a demonstration of trust and faith by the global aviation community in South Africa’s capabilities on aviation matters and specifically aviation security. It is certainly an enormous challenge; but a challenge that is surmountable. This move bodes well for the advancement of the transformation agenda which must continue as women play a meaningful role in all sectors previously dominated by men”

Ms Khoza plans to use the tenure to actively advocate for the continued elevation of the aviation security agenda, particularly among States across the continent. “Recent tragic events call for greater cooperation amongst all aviation role players. The global community needs to share pointers on successes and challenges faced in aviation security. The need for appropriate aviation security risk management remains an issue for every country. Moreover, the challenge is for various States to implement measures against the specific threats which they face, while finding a balance that would not stifle aviation activities.”

She is also keen on advocating for transformation of the aviation industry which is predominately male dominated. “It will be fulfilling to witness an increase in the number of capable women taking up senior positions in the aviation industry. The same applies to those that are from so called developing countries,” she said.

Ms Khoza acknowledged ICAO’s role in terms of passing various SARPs over the last four decades and ensuring global collaboration on aviation security measures. “ICAO has made great strides in guiding the global community on aviation security matters. We just need to continue with the great work that ICAO has been doing; putting particular emphasis on constant re-evaluation of systems and processes employed. Evolution is a consistent necessity as those with malicious intent are always on the prowl for weaknesses in aviation security systems. This puts the onus on authorities to constantly improve aviation security risk management systems in order to remain a yard ahead.”

-ENDS-

About the SACAA:

The South African Civil Aviation Authority (“SACAA”) is a juristic body established in terms of the Civil Aviation Act, 2009 (Act No. 13 of 2009) (“the Act”). SACAA is governed and controlled by the Civil Aviation Authority Board (“the Board”). In terms of mandate, the SACAA is tasked with promoting and maintaining 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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