

MEDIA RELEASE

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## First-ever Global Aviation Gender Summit to be held in South Africa

*Johannesburg:* In a few days' time, South Africa will host the first-ever Global Aviation Gender Summit that will see nearly 500 top-ranking representatives of governments and the aviation industry from across the world, including airlines, airports, and aircraft manufacturers gathered in Cape Town to jointly chart a new flight-path that will bring about meaningful gender transformation and equality in aviation.

The summit, which takes place over three days (8 - 10 August 2018), is being hosted by the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) in cooperation with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a United Nations agency responsible for managing civil aviation activities across the world. The summit is also being held in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and through the contribution of, among others, the SACAA, South African Airways (SAA), Transport Canada, Air Traffic Navigation (ATNS), Boeing, Ethiopian Airlines, Airports Company South Africa (ACSA), and Qatar Airways.

According to South Africa's Deputy Minister of Transport, Ms Sindisiwe Chikunga, the days of marginalising and relegating women across the globe to mere spectators when it comes to the air transport sector, are simply over.

"The discussion about total inclusivity and gender equality in aviation is long overdue, especially considering the fact that it has been over 104 years since the world's first scheduled passenger airline flight took-off. The time has come for all of us to vigorously challenge the status quo and in the process shift everyone's mind-set, and alter the systems that have enabled the status to continue, namely education, media, social and organisational values. We simply have to dismantle all barriers and build enablers that would bring about equality in aviation," says Chikunga.

ICAO's Secretary General, Dr Fang Liu, shares Chikunga's sentiments, adding that gender equality is central to sustainable development. "Aviation already contributes greatly to peace, prosperity and sustainable development, all over the world; yet aviation can do even more for our society, and especially for women. In order to accomplish this, it must first become a better example of gender equality in action. We must address head-on why women are still underrepresented in the majority of the technical and executive positions in aviation. This summit should be seen as a key opportunity to explore the challenges and enablers to women's advancement across a variety of technical and scientific disciplines," Liu declares.

Ms Poppy Khoza, the head of the SACAA, concurs, adding: “With such a crucial, and at times emotive subject, one expects the debates during the summit to be robust, and most importantly, the solutions to be pragmatic. The line-up of speakers is noteworthy and the topics are pointed, making it impossible for the summit to turn into a banal talk shop. Most importantly, if we do not emerge from this gathering with concrete goals, and start walking the talk, we would have failed the next generation of female aviators.”

### **ICAO Gender Equality Programme**

The 2016 ICAO Assembly Resolution A39-30 on the ICAO Gender Equality Programme, regarding the promotion of the participation of women in the global aviation sector, called for several actions to be taken by Member States and regions. In particular, the Assembly urged regional and international aviation organisations and the international aviation industry to demonstrate strong, determined leadership and commitment to advancing women’s rights and to taking the necessary measures to strengthen gender equality by establishing supporting policies, as well as the establishment and improvement of programmes and projects to further women’s careers within the aviation sector. Furthermore and among others, the Assembly also reaffirmed its commitment to achieving an aspirational goal of 50/50 (women-men) participation at all professional and higher levels of employment in the global aviation sector by 2030.

In addition to Chikunga, Liu, and Khoza, some of the high-powered executives that are lined up for panel discussions during the summit include:

- Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director, UN Women
- Ms Paule Avomo Assoumou Koki, Director: General Cameroon Civil Aviation Authority
- Ms Li Yinglin, Vice President, Yunnan Airport Group, China
- Dr Meridith Gould, Gender, Education and Youth Senior Advisor: Consultant at the World Bank & USAID
- Ms Zuks Ramasia, General Manager Operations, South African Airlines
- Ms Maria Rueda, International Operations & Development Director: UKCAA, UK
- Ms Monhla W. Hlahla, independent Non-Executive Director at Exxaro Resources Ltd and Liberty Holdings Ltd.

“The lack of gender equality and the proclivity to overlook women have long past their respective due dates. The journey towards changing the picture that most people have in mind when they imagine aviation, begins at this summit,” says Khoza.

According to Chikunga, it will take hard work to change what she refers to as “a deeply entrenched culture of gender inequality and society’s blasé attitude towards the status quo”.

She commended the SACAA for making it possible for South Africa to host the summit, and the Department of Transport for supporting the initiative.

“As South Africans we should take pride in the fact that we are the first country to host this crucial event, which is set to change the course and the plight of women in aviation worldwide. With August being Women’s Month in South Africa, the hosting could not have come at a better time,” Chikunga concludes.

**-ENDS-**

**About the SACAA:**

*The South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) is a Schedule 3A public entity reporting to the Department of Transport established in terms of the Civil Aviation Authority Act, 2009 (Act No 13 of 2009) (the Act). 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. The SACAA is governed and controlled by the Civil Aviation Authority Board.*

**For more information contact:**

Email: [media@caa.co.za](mailto:media@caa.co.za)

Website: [www.caa.co.za](http://www.caa.co.za)

Kabelo Ledwaba

Mobile Number: 083 451 2616

Email: [ledwabak@caa.co.za](mailto:ledwabak@caa.co.za)

Pappie Maja

Mobile Number: 083 451 2627

Email: [majap@caa.co.za](mailto:majap@caa.co.za)